DISOBEDIENCE.

Sarfojie Raja

A NOVEL.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY THE AUTHOR OF PLAIN SENSE.

"Unlimited obedience is due only to the Universal Father of Heaven and Earth. My Parents may be mad or foolish; may be wicked and malicious; may be erroneously religious, or absurdly scrupulous. I am not bound to mandates, either positive or negative, which either religion condemns, or reason rejects. When I suffer for my own crimes, when I may be sued for my own debts, I may judge, by a parity of reason, of my own happiness. The parent's moral right can arise only from his kindness, and his civil right only from his money."

JOHNSON'S LETTERS TO MRS. THRALE.

VOL. II.

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M DCCXCVII.

DISOBEDIENCE.

MARY'S confinement, however, lafted a much fhorter time than Lady Caroline had threatened. Sir James had not accompanied his family to town, when Lady Caroline, for the purpofe of fuperintending Mary's education, had been obliged to remove thither.— All the pleafure that it might have been expected that he would derive from the converfation, and interefting manners of a child fo long eftranged from him, and now fo

newly found, could not compenſate, in his opinion, for the ſolitude that prevails in all the accuſtomed London haunts of the great world, during the months of September and October.—He had therefore paſſed this melancholy ſeaſon in the uſual occupations of a man of faſhion at that time of the year.—He had attended ſeveral races; he had viſited one or two ſea bathing places; he had killed ſeveral brace of partridges, and, when winter approached, he had been wholly occupied by the pleaſures of the chace.—He had indeed, in the intervals of his more ſerious buſineſs, ſeveral times viſited his houſe in town.—There he had found reaſon to diſapprove of the ſeverity of Lady Caroline towards her *elève*; but he could not prevail with himſelf to forego amuſements he liked ſo much better, than becoming the guardian of the happineſs of his child.—He ſaw, too, with much ſatisfaction, the progreſs that Mary made in all thoſe arts that had ſo aſſiduouſly endeavoured to be taught her; and aſſured himſelf, that the winter would not paſs before he ſhould be able to form

form ſuch a matrimonial eſtabliſhment for her as would emancipate her from the tyranny of Lady Caroline, and fulfil his moſt ambitious wiſhes.

She was now, however, come to reſide in town, and was only accidentally abſent on the day, when Miſs Challoner's letter had fallen into Lady Caroline's hands.

On his return it was ſhewn to him, and Lady Caroline informed him of the puniſhment ſhe had inflicted upon Mary.

" How much have you ſuffered your paſſion to overcome your judgment !" cried he. " Had you treated her with contempt on ſuch a manifeſt dereliction of all taſte, and ſuffered the vulgar impertinence of this ſilly Miſs to have operated upon her pride, this letter would have done more towards driving her ſwain from her heart, than all the rage and ſeverity in your power will ever be able to do. I ſee compulſion will have no effect upon her mind ; we muſt only have

 recourſe

recourfe to it in difpofing of her perfon, if, in the event, we fhould find all other methods fail; and here I will join with you;—and you may be affured there is no feverity I fhall fcruple, rather than not difpofe of her in marriage as I pleafe.—But our bufinefs at prefent is to conceal this intention, and try to win her to our party, to make her think as nine-tenths of her fex do think, and as it is wonderful to me that fhe does not already think."

"Will you," faid Lady Caroline, paffionately, "fuffer her to entertain a hope that we will ever give our fanction to her monftrous paffion?"

"Such duplicity will *not* be ufelefs," faid Sir James; "I would explain myfelf fully, as to the impoffibility of our ever giving fuch a fanction, but without paffion or threatening, which will only ferve to throw her into the heroifm of oppofition, and then leave it to time, and the allurements of this gay town, to do the reft. It will be time enough when we have received fuch propofals

ſals as we approve, to reſort to more violent meaſures."

"I confeſs I have not patience, when I think of the mean depravity of her mind," ſaid Lady Caroline; "and it was with difficulty I forebore from beating her.—Had ſhe uttered one ſaucy word, I ſhould have ſtruck her."

"Well," returned Sir James, "let us ſend for her now; I will explain our reſolutions and deſigns to her."

When Mary made her appearance, Sir James extolled much the lenity and kindneſs with which ſhe had been treated, and of which, he ſaid, he ſuppoſed ſhe was fully ſenſible. He imputed, however, the error into which ſhe had fallen wholly to miſtake, and the not perfectly underſtanding her own advantage, and the intentions of her family. But (added he, fondly taking her hand) all admonitions on this ſubject muſt now be needleſs.—I will not ſay you are *rejected*, with all the inſolence of purſe proud vulgarity;

for I wiſh not to excite your bluſhes, or to add to your mortification. It will ſoon be forgotten in the ſenſe to which you muſt now be awakened, of what is due to your connexions and yourſelf.—Nor need I tell you that no intercourſe *whatever* will be allowed you with this vulgar family, becauſe I am ſure that your mind now revolts from all idea of ſuch an intercourſe; and no doubt but you will hear, with gratitude and pleaſure, that you are deſtined to adorn one of the higheſt ranks in the kingdom; a ſtation well ſuited to your beauty, my love; and ſo certainly ſecured to you, that no efforts, from whatever quarter, can diſappoint your exaltation. Be it your part to fit yourſelf, by an aſſiduous application to the means now in your power, for a ſituation to which you are equally called by your perſonal charms, by your birth, and by your fortune; and now, my love, let us forget every thing that is diſagreeable (added he, kiſſing her) go, humble yourſelf to Lady Caroline, and

aſk

aſk her pardon for the uneaſineſs you have undeſignedly given her."

Mary remained ſilent and immoveable; not having, at that moment, courage to avow the conſtancy of her affections to William, nor duplicity enough to affect an intention to ſacrifice them.

"I hope, child," ſaid Lady Caroline, "you are fully convinced of the truth of all that Sir James has ſaid?"

"I am not rejected by *William*," ſaid Mary; "and I ſhall never ceaſe to love him."

"There, Sir James," exclaimed Lady Caroline, "you hear———"

"Nothing that ſurpriſes me," interrupted Sir James; "in time, my dear, you will think very differently; you know it is your duty to obey your parents; you will not ſcruple, I am ſure, to tell Lady Caroline you are ſorry you have given her pain."

"I would not give any one pain," ſaid Mary; and I know not that I have done any thing that could give Lady Caroline pain."

"I knew you were unconſcious of the conſequences of what you had done," ſaid Sir James, "and Lady Caroline forgives you."

Lady Caroline gave no aſſent to this aſſurance; but Sir James, ſeeming to take it for granted that the reconciliation was complete, made Mary ſit down, and began to converſe on indifferent ſubjects.

Mary was as little duped by the art and blandiſhments of Sir James, as ſhe had been intimidated by the violence and paſſion of Lady Caroline. They equally ſerved to confirm her in her affections for the mild ſincerity of character to which ſhe had been accuſtomed from her birth, in the valley of Llamamon, and to confirm her in the mingled contempt and averſion which ſhe had

had conceived for the manners and principles of thofe with whom fhe now affociated.

To oppofe, however, either Sir James or Lady Caroline, fhe felt was in vain. She found herfelf fo clofely watched, that, had fhe had any encouragement, from the probability of her letters being received, to make the experiment, fhe could not have written. All that there remained for her to do, was to ftrengthen herfelf in her refolution to maintain the conftancy of her affections, in fpite of all oppofition, and to confole herfelf under her prefent difagreeable circumftances, by a ftrong confidence in the faith and affection of William, and thus quietly to wait for happier times.

Happy, indeed, was it for Mary at this period, that nature had beftowed upon her a cheerful fpirit, which, well fays the wife man, is a continual feaft; and in truth it was the only feaft that poor Mary had. Not that Lady Caroline *always*, or perhaps *ever meant*

to torment her; but all that Mary did, or omitted to do, was a perpetual irritation to Lady Caroline's temper. She had no tafte for the natural beauties, and elegant fimplicity of Mary's character.—All that was not according to the rule of high life, and the higheft polifh of artificial good breeding, was martyrdom to Lady Caroline either to hear or fee; and not being of a difpofition that led her to fuffer alone, fhe was never pained herfelf, that fhe did not double and treble the pain upon Mary. Her eagernefs too, to correct the rufticities which fo much fhocked her, defeated her own end. Mary became carelefs of acquiring a behaviour which coft her fo much chiding before it could be learnt; and feeing all the abfurdity of Lady Caroline's anxieties, and the ridicule of much of the manners fhe was endeavoured to be taught, fhe laughed, in fecret, at both the one and the other; and fometimes, half malicioufly, affected ignorance in rules of behaviour, in which, by this time, fhe was perfectly inftructed. In the mean

time, ſhe fell into a manner of her own which, with her uncommon beauty, and the artleſs ſimplicity and innocent archneſs of her character, procured her more admiration than all the artificial graces Lady Caroline was ſo eager ſhe ſhould poſſeſs, could have excited.

The men thought her charming; and the women, perhaps to conceal the envy they could not but feel, allowed ſhe was ſo. Lady Caroline, however, ſcarcely ſuffered her to appear any where except at home. The work of education went on unremittedly;— nor was there an hour in the day, in which Mary was not practiſing ſome leſſon, or preparing herſelf to receive the admonitions of her inſtructors.

She had an eager deſire to make herſelf miſtreſs of the languages that were taught her; and her progreſs was proportionate to her deſire. She alſo attended to the inſtructions of her drawing-maſter with diligence and pleaſure; but her dancing and

music-master wearied her to death. Not that she did not love both music and dancing; but the minute drudgery of the rudiments of both appeared insufferably tedious to her; she had been accustomed to carol her wild airs without rule, and without restraint, and to bound to the notes of a violin, in exact time, it is true, but in steps of her own composition; and she listened, with very little patience, to the technical terms and distinctions of art, made use of by Signor Martinelli and Monsieur Blanché.

CHAP. II.

ONE morning, when Mary was ſitting in ſad expectation of theſe her daily tormentors, ſhe was told that there was a perſon below who wiſhed to ſpeak with her.

"A perſon? What kind of perſon?" ſaid ſhe.

"A ſort of a country looking perſon;—not a gentleman; without powder; yet not a bad looking perſon either.—The ſervant thought he ſaid his name was Challoner.

Mary

Mary made but one ſtep from the ſofa whereon ſhe was ſitting, to the top of the ſtairs, and but two from the top to the bottom.

"My dear—dear William! I know it was falſe; I know you would never forget me."

Then recollecting ſhe was obſerved, and ſhrinking from the eager gaze of the footmen who were waiting in the hall, "Come, this way, my friend," ſaid ſhe, and tell me of all in dear Merionethſhire."

So ſaying, ſhe took him by the arm, and they went together to the room ſhe had juſt before quitted.

Six months reſidence in London, change of dreſs, and keeping what is called the beſt company, had made a ſtriking alteration in the appearance of Mary. Happily for William, and for herſelf, all within was as pure, and as unſophiſticated, as when ſhe breathed the

the free air of the Welch mountains.—But William, at this inftant, could judge only by intervals.

He ftood looking on her, for a moment, with a kind of melancholy furprife; then caft a look of difguft on the fplendor that furrounded her, and funk upon a chair, the victim, for the moment, of ill-founded miftruft, and torturing defpair.

"Good Heaven!" cried Mary, "what is the matter? What misfortune has happened? My dear old mother? She is well? Our kind Mr. Ellis? No harm has happened to him, I hope? Your own friends——."

"All, all are well," returned William;—"as well (continued he, with a deep drawn figh) as they can be, now they have loft you."

"Then what ails you? Oh! William, and is it thus we meet, after fo tedious an abfence? And have they told me true?"

"Would to Heaven, my dear Mary," faid William, "I could fee you in your ruffet

ruſſet brown jacket again, and your round eared cap, dancing on the green before our good vicar's door."

"Oh! now I ſee what you would be at; and ſo you think this quantity of fine ſweeping muſlin, that makes me ſtumble at every ſtep; this gaudy ribbon in my hair; theſe ſhining glaſſes, and their glittering frames; this carpet, that pretends to be covered with flowers, and yet yields no ſweets; you think that all theſe nothings, which are no part of me, have made me forget my very heart and ſoul?"

"Oh! Mary! ſo great—ſo mighty a change of circumſtances!——and ſo if you were to be made King of all England, William, I ſuppoſe I muſt not be your Queen?"

"If I were King of twenty Englands, I would forſwear them all, if you would not ſhare their ſovereignty.—And yet you ſuppoſe a little muſlin and gilding can make me forget you:—Thank you for the compliment, Sir," ſaid ſhe, making him a courteſy.

"My

"My dear Mary, it is not *you* I doubt; but the people on whom you depend."

"Yes, I recollect when *your* father forbade you to come to my old mother's any more, and said I was no match for such an one as you; you never came near me any more, and we have never spoken to each other since."

"Nay, but Mary, there is a difference.— Between my honesty and yours, I suppose you mean, for I really know of no other that can make you true, and me false."

"Upon my word, you are in a very civil humour to day."

"Dearest Mary, forgive me; but when I see and hear———"

"You see and hear me; such as I always was.—What signifies whether in a brown jacket, or a muslin gown? Here's my hand, William; and take that, and my word, that there is no person upon earth that can make me change my mind but yourself; and then it will not be *I* who change, but *you*."

William caught her in his arms.

"No,

" No, no," ſaid ſhe—no raptures; have done with your ſuſpicions and your fooleries, and let us ſit down to ſober narrative; I have much to tell, and much to hear, and we may be interrupted every minute."

" But you ſeem to be miſtreſs of yourſelf, and not to be afraid of acknowledging me publicly."

" As to acknowledging you," ſaid Mary, " the ſound of your name put all other thoughts to flight: I ſhould have ran to welcome you, though I had thrown down my lady mother in my haſte; but, as to being miſtreſs of myſelf—ah! William, how are you miſtaken! no, no, I am miſtreſs of nothing but your heart, and my own affections."

" Deareſt Mary———"

" Be quick; we have no time for nonſenſe:—Firſt, there's my papa, Sir James, with his ſoft looks and kind words; but has a hard heart, notwithſtanding, William.—Then there's my mamma, Lady Caroline—

all

all paſſion and fury; and laſtly, there's my governeſs."

"Governeſs!"

"Yes; for whatever you might think of me in Wales, here I am a booby—a chit—fit only to be kept in my nurſery, and ſet in a corner when I am naughty.—Nay, I have not yet learnt to walk, or to eat, or to ſpeak; therefore I have a governeſs to teach me all ſuch neceſſary acquirements.—"My dear ma'am, no running, I beſeech—walk thus—Oh! fie! no young lady cuts her meat ſo. Your ſpoon, I beg—what a word was that—pray let me never hear it again;—I fear you are incorrigible."—What think you of all this, William? But this is nothing; ſhe is upon me from morning till night, for ſome of my *horrid awkward tricks*, as my mamma Caroline calls them, and which really rob her of all the peace of her life.—Luckily ſhe is out this morning, upon ſpecial buſineſs.—There I have a ſinging-maſter and a dancing-maſter."

"Singing

"Singing and dancing! my dear Mary; what lark, what blackbird warbled like you? What goat, what lamb bounded with half your grace and agility?"

"Larks and blackbirds! goats and lambs! Oh! if my Lady Caroline heard you, ſhe would ſwoon at the ſound.—No, William, I can neither ſing nor dance; I have the capabilities, as both Signor Martinelli and Monſieur Blanché aſſure mamma, and with their care—their aid, I ſhall ſing and dance *á Merville*, that is, I believe I ſhall make people ſtare.—I have but little patience with my muſic and ſinging-maſter, though they do know more of theſe matters here than we do in Wales; and for dancing, you would die with laughing, if you were to ſee me under Monſieur Blanché's laws;—but I am ready to die with vexation:—Firſt poſition; ſecond poſition;—and now jump, if you pleaſe, Mademoiſelle; as if we did not know how to jump in Wales; but all theſe labours are neceſſary, that my mamma may not expire with my *gaucheries*, that is, my left-handed

handed tricks; and that ſhe may not ſink with ſhame, when ſhe introduces me into the world; for at preſent I ſee nobody but at home, and am conſidered there as an infant.--Mamma had thoughts of making me paſs for fifteen only, but the date of her voyage to India being well known, this was impoſſible; ſo ſhe is obliged to content herſelf with deploring her unhappy fate, in being the mother of ſo much ruſticity, in the form of a girl of eighteen, and with entreating all her friends to pity her, and to aſſiſt her in poliſhing the "rough hewn ſtatue." Dear William, ſometimes I laugh, and ſometimes I cry, on finding myſelf the object of ſuch provoking grief, and ſuch unneceſſary cares. The ladies call me the little ſavage, and the gentlemen the *belle ſavage*, which means pretty, you know, William; and to tell you the truth, I think ſome of them do not like me the worſe for my *gaucheries*, as my mamma calls them.—And there's an old gentleman that viſits here, who ſwears it is a pity to ſpoil ſo much nature; but mamma ſays

ſays he is a ſavage himſelf, and bids him hold his tongue. Then, William, I learn French and Italian, and theſe I learn with all my might and main; for when I know more languages, I can read more books; and then I think with what delight I ſhall teach you; and when your day's work is done, how happy we ſhall be, while you read aloud, and I ſew or ſpin."

"Will ſuch happy days ever come?" ſaid William, with a ſigh.

"What ſhould hinder them?" returned Mary; "at one and twenty I ſhall be my own miſtreſs; and you know I was never in haſte to be married, but have always told you, you muſt work hard; and when you had a ſnug little cottage to take me to, if it were no bigger than a nut-ſhell, with a neat farm about it, I would be your wife; but ſince your friends do not like me, I will be no ways obliged to them; and we won't come together, William, either to ſtarve or to beg."

"I could have taught myſelf patience, perhaps," ſaid William; "had you continued at Llamamon; for I ſhould then have ſeen you every week at leaſt, and I ſhould have had nothing to fear; but here, learning every day new leſſons, how to forget Llamamon and me; ſurrounded by Lords and ladies; growing uſed to all theſe fineries, till they become neceſſary to you.—Oh! Mary, how can I hope that I ſhall have merit enough at the end of three long years, to bring the delights of your childhood to your remembrance? or that you will quit, for me eaſe, elegance, and luxury—for labour, ruſticity, and a bare competence?"

"Unkind William!" ſaid Mary, burſting into tears.

"Nay," cried William, "how can I *deſire* it? How can I preſume to be ſo ſelfiſh?"

"Unkind William!" repeated Mary.

"Heaven is my witneſs," ſaid William, "that you wrong me.—My heart is breaking, when I think what you muſt loſe for my ſake, or that I muſt loſe you."

"Well,

"Well, go, go, then," ſaid Mary, ſobbing, "I ſee how it would be, if you were to be rich; and you may be rich; you may marry Miſs Fluellin, and then you will forget me; and then all will be well, you know."

"No, Mary," ſaid William, ſorrowfully; "I ſhall never forget you."

"Nor I you," ſaid Mary; "but ſince you dare not truſt me, you may do as you pleaſe, and I will do——as I can."

"Tell me," ſaid William, "does Lady Caroline know of our love?"

"To be ſure ſhe does," returned Mary; "do you think I would leave Llamamon willingly, and not ſee you? I begged, and I prayed; I cried—and I almoſt ſwore that I would not ſtir till you came here; but it ſignified nothing; I muſt go with my kind mamma; I ſhould travel in a fine coach;—I ſhould have fine clothes; I ſhould live in a fine houſe; I ſhould have fine ſervants to wait upon me; no body ſhould ſay me nay; and when I went out, I need not walk;—I ſhould have a coach, or a chair, and be carried

carried about from one fine place to another Oh! I ſhould ſoon forget Llamamon;—I cared not a ſtraw for all theſe fine things; and when they talked of forgetting Llamamon, I cried as if my heart would have broke; and ſo my papa and one of the footmen took me up gently between them, papa ſaying very kind things all the while, and they carried me to the coach; my dear old mother crying all the time ſadly, but telling me, ah! how could ſhe? I was going to be very happy; and then my mamma got into the coach, and ſhe tried to comfort me; and ſhe called me her love, and her angel, and ſaid not a word about my gaucheries, and my ruſticity, or the rough hewn ſtatue. I was her darling, and her joy; and I ſhould have all I wiſhed, and ſhe loved me dearly, and ſhe hoped I ſhould love her;—well, and I began to love her; and I thought ſhe would love you too; and that, as I ſhould be richer than Miſs Fluellin, your father would be croſs no longer, and we ſhould all be happy. So I cheered up, and was as blithe

as a bird; only that I thought it a little unkind that she would not let me see you;—only Sir James said he could not stay, because of business.

"But, would you think it, William? all this was false and hollow; that very night lady mamma, and papa, Sir James, let me into the secret.—After I was gone to bed at the inn, in a little room, through that in which they were sitting, as I lay tossing and tumbling, and could not sleep, because I was thinking of you, I heard them agree, that they must be very kind and gentle to make me forget Llamamon, and that clown William;—yes, they called you a clown!—and dazzle me (that was the word) with all the fine things they could think of;—and when they had polished me, and made me tolerable, then they were to marry me to some lord or other: I was ready to spring out of bed, and tell them I would not be polished, and that I would not forget you;—but I thought it was better to lie still; and they went on to say, what a great deal of trouble

trouble they ſhould have with me; and they wiſhed I had been a boy, becauſe of the name and the title, and a great deal that I did not underſtand; and then they quarrelled, but I cannot tell about what.—For my part, I cried with vexation, till, like a child, I cried myſelf to ſleep.

"And do you think I could love ſuch treacherous people? Oh! no! the next day I was quite altered, and ſat melancholy and ſilent. For a little time they continued kind and gentle; but mamma ſoon grew croſs, and then ſhe placed Mrs. Governeſs about me; and now, between them, I am ſcolded all day long. From the firſt, they would ſcarcely ſuffer me to mention Llamamon; and now, if I ſay any thing like remembering how happy I was there, I am threatened to be puniſhed; and ſometimes I am ſhut up in my room for days together. What they can hope from this, I know not; but this I know, that they do not take the way to make me forget Llamamon."

William could ſcarcely forbear weeping at this picture of Mary's perſecutions.

"At leaſt," ſaid he, "with me you would be ſure of a heart that would always love you, and that would rather break than give you a moment's pain."

"What ſignifies the virtues of your heart to me?" ſaid Mary, "if you dare not truſt mine?"

"I dare—I dare," cried William, preſſing her to his boſom; "and from this moment I will believe that no time, no circumſtance will change your love."

"Keep in that faith," ſaid Mary, "and I defy all the Lady Carolines, and all the Sir James's in the world with their ſcoldings, and their cajoleries, and dazzlings, to make me forget you for an inſtant; but it is now your turn.—How comes it, that ſix long months are gone (for ever ſince I left Llamanon) and that this is the firſt day in which I have heard of you?"

"My

" My ſtory," returned William, " is very ſhort.—" No ſooner did I hear from Mr. Ellis the melancholy news of your departure from Llamamon, than I reſolved to quit Ireland directly, in ſpite of all my father's efforts to hinder me. I was, however, detained for a few weeks, by circumſtances that I could not foreſee, and to which I was compelled to yield. On my return to Llanbeder, I ran, I flew to the dear cottage.—I thought I ſhould have died with grief, when I ſaw again places where once I was always ſure of ſeeing you, and where you were now no longer to be ſeen. Our dear mother wept like a child, when ſhe ſaw me; and I obſerved, with freſh grief, how much ſhe was gone down ſince you had left her. I could not help weeping with her, and it was long before we could explain ourſelves to each other. At length ſhe told me, that ſhe had heard nothing from you, from within a week after your departure, but that ſhe was ſure this was not your fault; that ſhe had anſwered your letter, ſhe thought, very guardedly; yet

yet that Lady Caroline had found fault with it, and ordered her to write another, and to advife you to think no more of Llamamon, for that it was right that you fhould forget us all."

"Ah!" cried Mary, interrupting him; "then that cruel letter was Lady Caroline's, and not my dear mother's! yes, yes, it was much more like the one than the other."

"She was fure," continued William, "that her letter would half break your heart, and it more than half broke her's to write you fuch an one. I impatiently demanded where you were, being refolved to fee you, coft what it would; but fhe could give me no intelligence on this point.—She faid fhe had been ordered to direct her letter to you in the country, and that yet fhe had reafon to believe you were in town.

"I would immediately have fet out for London: But befides that I was not yet my own mafter, Mr. Ellis advifed me to wait where I was, perfuaded that you would find fome means of letting us hear from you.—

In

In the mean time, every method was taken to induce me to marry Miſs Fluellin—need I add, my dear Mary?—in vain.

"I went every day to the cottage, but no tidings could I learn. At length Eleanor aſtoniſhed me with the intelligence that my ſiſter had heard from you; that ſhe had been with her at your requeſt, and that ſhe had promiſed to let you know Eleanor was well; but my ſiſter abſolutely refuſed to ſay where you were, affirming that I ſhould then know, and that my father had commanded her to keep your abode ſecret.

"I returned to Llanbeder, out of breath with haſte. I entreated, I threatened, I knelt, I wept, I ſwore, but all in vain; no rock was more immoveable than my hard-hearted ſiſter. Ah! my dear Mary, why ſhould I diſtreſs you with the family diſputes that enſued? There was no miſery with which my father did not threaten me, if I did not inſtantly comply with his commands, and become the huſband of Deborah; and

there was no mifery that I was not determined to embrace, rather than her.

"In the midft of thefe contefts, I attained the age of twenty-one. I was then to make my decifion between affluence and Mifs Fluellin, and poverty and you. I was not fo ignorant as to fuppofe any more than my father, that if you perfevered in your kind thoughts of me, that you would be able to give me more than your dear felf; but this was all to me; and gaining frefh hope of your conftancy, from your having written to my fifter, I comforted myfelf, that, in any cafe, we fhould not be more undone than if you had not been fo cruelly fnatched from us. I hefitated not, therefore, to reject Mifs Fluellin, in the moft unequivocal terms; to abandon my paternal roof, and every profpect of fortune, but what could arife from my own induftry, and to fet out in fearch of you. Having no clue to guide me, I have wandered about fome time over this great city, making all the inquiries I had the wit to think of, and traverfing every

ftreet

ſtreet over and over, where I was told it was likely I ſhould find ſuch a family as I deſcribed. How long my fruitleſs ſearch would have continued I know not, had I not yeſterday met a ſervant of Mr. Wynne's; he knew me inſtantly, and inquired what had brought me to town. I heſitated, and choſe not to mention your name.

"What," cried he, "are you come after your old love, who is now a fine lady? If ſo, faith you may hang yourſelf, as my maſter is ready to do; for my ſiſter, who lives with Lady Caroline, ſays her young lady is only to marry a lord."

"But where," cried I eagerly, "where does Sir James Seabright live?"

"There," cried he, pointing; "I am this moment come from his houſe."

"I turned haſtily from him, meaning to inquire for you directly."

"Where are you going?" ſaid he; "take my word for it you have no chance of ſeeing your love now, or even of being admitted within the doors. The family are juſt gone

to dinner; and if you are not quite ſure the young lady is miſtreſs of herſelf, which, from what I learn, ſhe is not—your only hope of ſeeing her is to call in a morning, and to ſend word that ſomebody on buſineſs wants to ſpeak with her."

"By farther diſcourſe, I ſoon found what he ſaid was founded on reaſon, and coſt me what it would, I was reſolved to wait till the next morning.

"He told me, that it would be in vain to try to ſee you early, and that my beſt chance would be, if I could find an hour when Lady Caroline was from home; and he added, that ſhe generally went out in her carriage every morning.

"Grounding my conduct on this intelligence, I took my ſtation at the corner of a ſtreet, which leads into this place. Soon I ſaw Lady Caroline's coach come to the door of her houſe, and after its having waited nearly an hour, which I thought three, I ſaw it drive away with two ladies in it, neither of them, I was convinced, was you.—I knocked

at

at the door; I inquired after you in the manner I had been directed, and it was my happy lot to be admitted to see you."

Mary was drowned in tears at the thoughts of what William had suffered, and must suffer for her sake.—She held out her hand to him.

"My dear William," said she, "how shall I repay such constancy, and such kindness?"

"Ah! Mary," cried he, "you do not surely mean to reproach me! what can I sacrifice, compared to that which you must give up? if, indeed, I am the happy man you flatter me I am."

"I shall give up nothing but a life I hate," returned Mary; "and a life I think I should hate, if there was not such a person in the world as yourself. But you will give up the comforts and affluence you enjoy, and put yourself out of the best method of making use of your own efforts, to procure them for yourself."

"Talk not ſo," cried William, "if you would not have me ſink under a ſenſe of my own unworthineſs; and now tell me, my beloved, what ſhall we reſolve upon?"

"We muſt," ſaid Mary, "purſue the path that our good Mr. Ellis has ſo long ago marked out for us."

"I never will be a burthen to you, or to your friends. I never will be a run-away.—I will not do that, in which I ſhall always glory, in a manner that will make me bluſh. I ought to be your wife, and I will be your wife; but I will be ſo in the face of the world, openly, and without diſguiſe. You have waited until you are one and twenty, before you have thought it right to break from your father, and to begin to work for yourſelf. I will be twenty one before I aſſert my right to chuſe for myſelf that companion with whom I am to ſpend my life.—I underſtand this is the proviſo fixed by the laws of my country, as the proper one at which children may begin to act for themſelves, and I will wait that period, that my actions

actions may be as lawful as my principles are pure."

William looked on Mary with astonishment. He had never heard her speak with so much decision; he had never heard her express herself with so much energy; she penetrated his thoughts.

"Ah! William," said she, "I see you are surprised; you expected not so much resolution and thought from me; but I have been much afflicted since I saw you; and I have been without a single person to whom I could apply for advice.—Affliction makes us think; and having no one on whom to rely, makes us feel our own strength.—I have reasoned all I could upon what I ought to do, and I believe I ought equally to be your wife, and to take care that I do not become so in a precipitate and unbecoming manner."

"You *ought* to be my wife!" repeated William; Is it only a matter of duty, then, Mary?"

"Silly creature!" ſaid Mary, "would you have me tell you again and again how much I love you? and nothing but how much I love you?"

"Again, and again, a thouſand times," ſaid William; "you cannot tell me too often; nor can you wonder that I ſhould require repeated aſſurances of a bleſſing ſo much above my deſerts."

"Well, try to deſerve me better, then," ſaid Mary, "that I may not be out of countenance for myſelf."

"But," ſaid William, "you talk of one and twenty.—"Alas! Mary, what are we to do with the three terribly long intervening years?"

"Do with them?" returned Mary, "why they are as precious to us as gold. Is not that the period in which you are to provide me a ſhelter? Is not that the period in which I am to improve myſelf in every thing that can be uſeful to us in future? Shall I not have, during theſe three years, an opportunity of hoarding a little of all that money

which

which is given me to lay out in ribbons and trinkets? Go, go, William; return into Wales; conſult with Mr. Ellis; with his advice and aſſiſtance, I doubt not but you will be able to provide for me in three years time, ſome little cottage or other; let it, if poſſible, be near dear Llamamon, and then return and claim me, and you will find me ready to follow you all the world over."

William, in a tranſport, would have embraced her.

"I will have no nonſenſe," ſaid ſhe; "I never allowed it; and now I have nobody to take care of me, I muſt take double care of myſelf."

"But my dear Mary," ſaid William, "it is true you point out a Heaven in proſpect, but how am I to ſubſiſt in my way thither? Do you think I can live three years without any intercourſe with you? Without aſſurances, from time to time, that you continue your kindneſs to me?"

"Was

"Was there ever ſuch an infidel!" ſaid Mary.

"Dear Mary," cried William, "you require more faith from me than—than would be ſufficient to ſave a thouſand."

"But it is faith, grounded upon works, ſimpleton," ſaid ſhe; "I only require you to believe in proportion as I do."

"And what will you do? aſked William.

"Every thing in my power," returned Mary; "and with ſo hearty a will as I have to oblige you, you will not find that power ſmall."

"But here," ſaid William, "you are watched and guarded; all your letters intercepted; ſurrounded with ſpies; without a friend near you. In ſuch circumſtances, what can you do, however kind your will may be."

Mary fixed her eyes thoughtfully on the carpet.

"I ſhould diſdain to corrupt any of the ſervants," ſaid ſhe, "if I had the means of doing ſo, or thought it ſafe to attempt it. I am convinced I have been betrayed by that ſolemn looking hypocrite, who waits upon me with ſuch profound reſpect.—No doubt but that ſhe carried all the letters I gave her for the poſt, to my lady mamma."

"Do you know any thing of the houſe maid?" ſaid William.

"Very little," returned Mary; "only I have thought once or twice ſhe has pitied me, when Lady Caroline or my governeſs have been teazing me; and ſhe is always very officious in offering to do any thing for me.—Why do you fix upon her?"

"She is that ſiſter of Mr. Wynne's ſervant, of whom I ſpoke," ſaid William;—"ſhe is a Welch woman too, and I have little doubt but that ſhe would befriend us with all her heart."

"I hate ſecrets," ſaid Mary; "and when I do nothing of which I ought to be aſhamed, why ſhould I appear to be ſo?"

"Were it in your power to act openly, even at the cost of any uncomfortableness," said William, "I would not urge you to secrecy;—but alas! you must either condescend to carry on a secret correspondence with me, or none can be between us."

Mary ruminated—she hesitated.—At length she said, "If you can manage this matter, I consent.—But then I restrain all communication to what is essentially necessary to our interests, and to the furthering the plan we have laid.—You shall, from time to time, inform me how you prosper; and I will take care that you shall know every thing relating to me, that it is necessary you should know."

"All you do," said William, "it is necessary I should know."

"No, no," cried Mary; "that would be pleasant; but it is not necessary; we must attend to our necessities now; our pleasures are to come.—Hark! (added she) you must be gone; that is Monsieur Blanché's knock; and besides, I expect Lady Caroline and my governess

governefs back every moment.—Farewell—Farewell."

"Farewell, indeed!" faid William, ftraining her to his bofom; and God enable you to do all you promife."

The dancing-mafter was announced.

"Doubt it not," faid Mary, as fhe withdrew from William's arms.—"Be gone."

"*Bon jour*, Monfieur," faid fhe, with a flight courtfey, to the dancing-mafter.—"And now, William (turning to him, and fpeaking in Welch) for jumping as high as Cader Idris!"

CHAP. III.

THE variety of emotions with which this unexpected visit of William's had filled the bosom of Mary, totally incapacitated her from understanding one word that Monsieur Blanché said to her.

She stood still when she should have moved, and she moved when she should have stood still; she jumped when she should have *chassé*; and she *chassé* when she should have jumped.

"*Mon Dieu*, Mademoiſelle!" cried the dancing-maſter.

"*Mon Dieu*, indeed! Monſieur," ſaid ſhe; "the thing is quite impoſſible; I cannot dance this morning; and you will do me the greateſt favour if you will repeat your viſit another time."

The obſequious dancing-maſter took his leave; but meeting Lady Caroline upon the ſtairs, was queſtioned by her how her daughter had performed that morning.—Monſieur replied with a ſhrug of his ſhoulders.

"She has been heedleſs?" cried Lady Caroline.

Point de tout," replied Monſieur Blanché; "*Un Garçon*, who was with Mademoiſelle, ſeemed to have deſtroyed all her ideas."

"*Un Garçon!*" repeated Lady Caroline, and ruſhed forward into Mary's apartment.

"Who," cried ſhe, entering; "who has been with you in my abſence?"

"William," ſaid Mary, calmly.

"William!" repeated Lady Caroline;—"where is Boardman? Where is Hatton? This moment ſhall they march; they ſhall not breathe another inſtant in the houſe:—And as for you———"

"I am alone to blame," ſaid Mary;—"neither Mrs. Boardman or Mrs. Hatton have had any thing to do in the matter."

"Who let him in; Who introduced him?"

"The footman let him in, and I introduced him myſelf."

"Audacious!" cried Lady Caroline, ſtriking her.

"More than this," ſaid Mary, walking deliberately out of the room, "will I bear for William's ſake."

Lady Caroline followed her with quickneſs; but Madame de Merville, juſt then coming up ſtairs, puſhed between them, and entreated Lady Caroline to conſider what ſhe was about. Mary took ſhelter in her own room, where ſhe eaſed her full and ſwelling

ſwelling heart, filled with a contrariety of paſſions, by a flood of tears.

The hurricane that Lady Caroline raiſed throughout the whole houſe, was ſcarcely ſubſided when Sir James returned from his morning's ramble, at the hour of dreſſing.

"Now, now," cried Lady Caroline, when ſhe ſaw him; "now is the hour of ſeverity come ſurely: This farmer, this clown, this William Challoner has been here; he has been within theſe walls; he has been admitted to her who is a diſgrace to our blood; they have been more than two hours in private together; and ſhe has had the aſſurance to tell me that there is nothing ſhe will not ſuffer for his ſake.—What puniſhment is equal to ſuch depravity?"

Sir James heard this intelligence with a very ſenſible chagrin.—He knew the human heart too well not to be aware that ſuch an interview would do more towards confirming

confirming Mary in her predilection for William in an hour, than all they could do to ſhake his influence over her in ſix months.

"How the devil," cried he, peeviſhly, "could this happen?"

"By ſuch a combination of careleſsneſs and confidence," ſaid Lady Caroline, "that it was impoſſible to foreſee.—That blundering George, for which I have diſmiſſed him my ſervice, when the fellow inquired for the wicked girl, inſtead of informing Boardman, told Mary herſelf who was here; and ſhe, regardleſs of every appearance, flew down into the hall, and introduced him herſelf into the drawing-room. You may imagine how I have treated her; but it is neceſſary to think of ſome means to render ſuch abominations impoſſible for the future."

"It is neceſſary," returned Sir James, "that I ſhould take another tone with her to what I have hitherto held.—But ſtill this is no time for much ſeverity. On the contrary, we muſt ſeem to be more indulgent

than

than ever. So far ſhe has been wholly treated as a child. She has been tormented by leſſons and maſters from morning till night; and ſhe has been flattered or ſcolded like an infant, according as ſhe has been diligent or careleſs in her exerciſes.

"This treatment for a girl, who thinks herſelf woman grown, and who has a lover to liſten to her complaints, muſt be extremely provoking. You may remember how a ſimilar conduct irritated yourſelf. We muſt ſo far give way to her, as to treat her, like what ſhe thinks herſelf, a woman. Let us throw her into the world; hitherto ſhe has ſcarcely known what amuſement is. Let us try to intoxicate her with pleaſure, and with the flatteries of the men, that her beauty, the moment ſhe is known, will draw round her. I cannot yet doubt but that, when ſhe has an opportunity of comparing the qualities of her ruſtic favourite with thoſe of the men of faſhion, her heart will make the very election we wiſh it. It is impoſſible it ſhould be otherways, if we do not, by

an imprudent ſeverity, force her into ſuch engagements, and ſuch contracts, both with herſelf and her lover, as her pride afterwards will not allow her to break."

"But ſhe is ſo ruſtic herſelf," cried Lady Caroline, "that I ſhall bluſh to death to introduce her into the world. I had flattered myſelf with the hopes of making her a little more tolerable before I brought her out."

"Your prejudices deceive you," replied Sir James; "you ſee no attractions but in manners ſimilar to your own. In my eyes, and in the eyes of all who look on Mary, at leaſt of all the men, I am ſure, there is an inexpreſſible charm in all ſhe does. And there does not a day paſs that I am not importuned by the praiſes of my pretty daughter, and reproached for not letting her be more ſeen."

"I believe all the world but yourſelf, Sir James," returned Lady Caroline, "will give the preference that is due to the manners I wiſh to form Mary by;—but all my pains and trouble are rewarded with your uſual gratitude;

gratitude; ſo take your own methods with the girl, and ruin her your own way. If I might rule, ſhe ſhould live upon bread and water, till ſhe had abjured this William, and given her hand to the man we choſe for her."

"We have not yet choſen that man," ſaid Sir James, warmly; "when we have, you will find me ready to concur heartily with you in inforcing our choice. If ſeverity is then neceſſary, you will ſee I am as free from the weakneſs of compaſſion as yourſelf. I will now go to her; and according to the manner in which ſhe receives my remonſtrances, treat her with more or leſs harſhneſs."

"Nothing but the greateſt harſhneſs will do," ſaid Lady Caroline; "and ſometime, but probably too late, you will be convinced of this."

Sir James went to Mary's apartment.—He found her very calmly reading; nor could he diſcover any traces of anger or ſhame on her countenance. She did not

bluſh when ſhe ſaw him, nor ſeem inclined to deprecate the anger which ſhe muſt be ſenſible ſhe had reaſon to expect. She aroſe with her uſual modeſty and obligingneſs, and offered him her ſeat.

"Sit ſtill," ſaid he, "I will take this chair.—Then, after a ſhort pauſe, as if he had expected her to have ſpoken, are you not ſurpriſed, Mary (added he) with this viſit?"

"I cannot," returned ſhe, "be quite, unconſcious of its cauſe or its purport."

"And are you," cried Sir James, "are you not aſhamed to ſee me?"

"I am not aware that I ought to be ſo," replied Mary.

"What! not after all my indulgence to you? Not after the excuſes I was ſo ready to find for your laſt act of imprudence? ſo openly, ſo daringly to fly in the face of the known will of Lady Caroline and myſelf? and ſo unbluſhingly to treſpaſs againſt the modeſty of your ſex?"

"To

"To treſpaſs againſt the modeſty of my ſex!" ſaid Mary, with aſtoniſhment.

"You know not," continued Sir James, heedleſs of her exclamation, "the feelings of a parent, and can hardly ſuppoſe, after ſuch atrocious and accumulated offences, that tenderneſs and love ſhould ſtill be the predominant emotions in my heart towards you, nor how willing I am ſtill to impute all that has paſſed to miſtake, and to hope every thing I wiſh for the future.

"On you, my child, depends the happineſs of the remainder of my life, the happineſs of Lady Caroline, and the honour of the family; and can I ſuffer myſelf to ſuppoſe that you will throw all theſe valuable pledges away, with your own reputation into the bargain, merely to gratify a premature fancy of your own, which, in your riper years and judgment, you will be the firſt to ſee the folly of?"

Mary was ſilent. Although ſhe ſcrupled not to avow her ſentiments in the face of

Lady Caroline's rage, ſhe felt repugnant to urging thoſe pleas that occurred to her in her own favour, againſt the calm and ſincere concern that ſeemed to actuate Sir James.

"No," continued Sir James; "I cannot ſuppoſe this. But I can readily allow for the prejudices, and the miſtaken ideas of things that you have hitherto indulged in.—You may very naturally, at preſent, ſee nothing in the oppoſition we make to the bent of your affection, but the inſatiable cravings of ambition and avarice; and you have been taught (very properly, I allow) to conſider theſe as the irregular emotions of the heart which ought to be ſubdued. But this is a miſtaken ſtate of the caſe; humility and diſintereſtedneſs are virtues, but they are not the only virtues. We owe a due conſideration to the regulated orders of the ſociety we live in; we owe ſtill more to the intereſts of the family of which we make a part; and it is our duty to take care neither to ſhock the one nor injure the other.—

Nothing

Nothing appears to you at this time more eaſy, or perhaps more juſt, than that Lady Caroline and myſelf, by allowing of your connexion with this young man, ſhould put an end to all diſputes, and render all parties happy. In twelve months time you will ſee that the thing was equally impoſſible, and wrong; that, by doing ſo, we ſhould draw down upon ourſelves the well-founded cenſure of all rightly judging people; and that, ſo far from promoting your happineſs, and that of your lover, we ſhould have entailed for ever on you, and your poſterity, that miſfortune and diſgrace which ever attend ſuch diſproportionate and incongruous connexions.

"We ſee *that now*, which you will ſee *hereafter*; and hence it becomes our moſt ſacred duty, to prevent an evil which involves equally your unhappineſs, and our diſhonour."

Mary's heart fluttered; ſhe felt an emotion, unfelt before.—Hitherto ſhe had not entertained a doubt but that her duty and

her inclination went hand in hand. Sir James's ſophiſtry ſtaggered her.—It ſuggeſted to her, that ſhe *might* be wrong; her varying colour, and tearful eye, ſhewed Sir James that her's was not a mind knowingly to perſiſt in error; he ſaw his advantage, and thus purſued it.

"It would be poſſible," continued he, "to prevent this evil by harſh and ſevere methods; but my ſoul abhors ſuch thoughts. And alas! my dear child, even in ſeeking your happineſs, I know not that I ſhould have courage to inſure it at ſuch a rate.—I am your father, Mary, unwilling as you have always appeared, to allow of the relationſhip. Your unhappy father, who, from cruel neceſſity, having been ſeparated from you in your infancy, return, after an abſence of many years, to the mortification of finding thoſe affections in your breaſt, which nature had made my due, given to others, while mine towards you are as warm and parental as if I had never parted with you from my ſight.

ſight. In theſe circumſtances, it would be in vain to conjure you, by the force of love, to have compaſſion on me;—you acknowledge no ſuch power, but———"

"Oh!" cried Mary, throwing herſelf upon her knees before him, "do not ſay ſo. If I *may* love you; if I *may* hope you will be a father to me, how much love, how much duty will you find me ready to offer you!"

"With what tranſport," cried Sir James, embracing her, "do I now hold you to my heart! Now, indeed, I am a father; and now I may promiſe myſelf you will be all I wiſh."

"All I *can* be," replied Mary, recoiling, in her mind, from what theſe words might be meant to imply; "that I will be; nor ever, again, *my father*, ſhall you have reaſon to ſay I do not allow of the honoured relationſhip."

"You can do all," returned Sir James, "that I will require of you. Promiſe me that you will break off all intercourſe with this young man for twelve months to come.

During that time, look around you; and at the end of that period, decide for yourself."

"Nothing," cried Mary, rejoiced with ſuch an opportunity for conſidering, at leiſure, her new born ſcruples; "nothing can be more reaſonable.—If I do not think at the end of twelve months as I think now, I am not worthy of William, and I ought not to be his."

"And if you do," replied Sir James, "I will wave every conſideration, and make him your huſband."

Mary threw herſelf into Sir James's arms.

"My father!" cried ſhe; "now *indeed* you are my father."

He embraced her, but with a coldneſs of affection that correſponded ill with the tranſport which ſhe at that moment felt towards him.

"How

"How ſhall I be aſſured," ſaid Sir James, "that you will religiouſly keep your promiſe?"

"Have I not given my word?" returned Mary; but you ſhall have an *additional*, I will not ſay a *better* ſecurity. I muſt write to William; I muſt appriſe him of the engagement I have entered into; and you, my dear father, you ſhall ſee my letter."

Such frankneſs, ſuch ingenuouſneſs, could not but convince Sir James of *her* ſincerity, even while he felt abaſhed, by a conſciouſneſs of his own duplicity.

"Let us ſee this extraordinary letter," ſaid Sir James.—"This young man little thought, a few hours ago, that I ſhould read the firſt letter you wrote to him."

"He little thought," returned Mary, "that I ſhould have written to him ſo ſoon. Such a ſpeedy intercourſe was not in our plan, nor had I any certain method of conveying my letter."

"Let us see," said Sir James, "how you will address him."

Mary wrote as follows:

"I was to apprize you if any change "took place in my situation; a wonderful "change has taken place:—It depends "upon me, and me alone, whether or not "we shall pass our future lives together;— "yet be not elated; I reiterate no promise; "I repeat no vow: I have, on the contrary, "engaged to suspend all intercourse with "you for twelve months to come.—This "period I am to pass in making myself sure "of my own inclinations, and the propriety "there would be in following them. At "the end of that time I am to become your "wife, with the consent of my parents, or "to resign you for ever. Were I to tell "you now—what my thoughts will be then, "it would be to make that choice already, "which I have promised to suspend.—This

"I

"I will not do; and if this feeming hefita-
"tion appears to violate the engagements
"that are already between us, remember
"that thefe engagements were made when
"I knew not that I was accountable to any
"but thofe who allowed me to form them.
"Recollect, farther, that if my new fitua-
"tion has not cancelled any former duty, it
"has, at leaft, impofed fome frefh ones.
"One of the leaft equivocal of thefe muft
"be, every compliance with the will of my
"*real* parents, not inimical to the rights
"which others have in me.—Remember,
"too, that the reward of the facrifice, at
"prefent required of me, is to be a free
"choice, in the fhort fpace of twelve
"months; one third of the time I had ap-
"pointed for myfelf.

"When you have made thefe reflections,
"you will acknowledge there is nothing
"more reafonable, than that I fhould yield
"my confent to what is demanded of me,
"nor any thing more indulgent than the
"conditions annexed. I depend too firmly
"upon the integrity of your principles, to

"fear that you ſhould endeavour to make "me break the engagement I have entered "into, and you ought to have too ſtrong a "reliance upon mine, to fear the conſe- "quences of it."

Sir James read the letter; he could not but be ſtruck with the uprightneſs and candour with which it was marked; nor could he find any thing to diſapprove, except the concluding ſentence, pointing to it.

"Is not this a promiſe that you will not change your mind?" ſaid he.

"Surely not," returned Mary, glad to enter ſomething farther into the ſubject;— "it is only a reference to my known ſentiments; to which, if I did not refer, William might ſuppoſe I had *already* changed my mind."

"But does it not imply," ſaid Sir James, "that you cannot change it without a breach of your integrity?"

"Aſſuredly

"Assuredly it does," replied Mary:—"And oh! my father, can any thing be more true than this?"

"What then," cried Sir James, angrily, "do you mean by your promise to me?"

"What that promise expresses," said Mary; "a renunciation of all intercourse with William for twelve months, and an engagement that I will, during that period, make the best use of my reason to decide what choice I ought to make at the end of it."

"But you have already decided," said Sir James.

"Ah! no," returned Mary, "what is fit and right, it is true, I believe, already to be decided *for* me; but who shall say, that in a twelve month's time I shall think that *right* and *just* which I think so now? You tell me, my dear father, that the time will come when I shall be the first to see and condemn the folly of my present opinions; that *hereafter* I shall perceive *that* which you see *now*. I am willing to put this to the trial; and

and if, indeed, any length of time can ſo corrupt my principles, my connexion with poor William would be as you ſay, little for his happineſs, and I ſhall be as earneſt as yourſelf to put an end to it."

"Do you conſider on whom you reflect by all this?" ſaid Sir James.

"I mean not to reflect on any body," returned Mary; "I thought I had had a ſtrait path before me, but you point me out a very intricate road, to which I have no clue. You talk to me of the regulated orders of ſociety; of the intereſts of my family:—Alas! they are things I do not underſtand. How can it be neceſſary to the intereſts of my family, that its preſent wealth, which gives ſo much more than is neceſſary to happineſs, ſhould be augmented by my marriage? How can it ſhock theſe regulated orders of ſociety, whatever they may be, that I ſhould become the wife of one of the moſt worthy of his ſex, who is as amiable as he is excellent; who has been my companion and my friend from his childhood, and who, for

my

my ſake, has ſacrificed every proſpect of affluence that he had in the world?"

"Was there ever ſuch a reaſoner!" ſaid Sir James.—Pray, child, where did you learn logic?"

"I do not know," cried Mary, bluſhing, "what logic is.—But my kind Mr. Ellis took pains to teach me what juſtice and generoſity were?"

"The devil take him for his pains," thought Sir James; but ſeeing how little proſpect there was of deceiving her underſtanding, he thought it beſt to adhere to his plan of corrupting her heart, and only replied, "He gave you partial views of thoſe ſublime virtues; time will enlighten your mind on theſe, and many other points.—Juſtice and generoſity are firſt due to the authors of your being; and it is not until you have fulfilled their claims upon you, that you can have a right to attend to the claims of others.—But no more of what I ſee you do not underſtand.—Give me your letter.—How is it to be directed?"

"Pardon

"Pardon me," ſaid Mary; "you, my dear father, I cannot doubt; ſo fairly and ſo kindly have you dealt by me.—But——"

"But what?" ſaid Sir James.

"I *have written* letters;—I have *ſent* letters—that——that have not been properly delivered," ſaid Mary.

"You are not to wonder," returned Sir James, "at any effects of the lively intereſt Lady Caroline takes in your welfare, or of her ſolicitude that you ſhould act with propriety. But to cure you of all ſuſpicion that I have any deſign to ſuppreſs or alter your letter, you ſhall ſee me deliver it, ſealed and directed, into Wroughton's hands, and hear my orders for its being given to the poſt."

"Oh! no," ſaid Mary; "is not your word ſufficient? There is the letter, my dear father; I cannot doubt but that you will do with it as you have ſaid."

It was indeed Sir Jame's full intention ſo to do. The letter was not exactly what he

wiſhed;

wiſhed; yet he depended ſo little upon any change that time *alone* would work in the ſentiments of Mary, that he hoped nothing more, from this ſuſpenſion of intercourſe between the lovers, that he had thus obtained, than the gaining ſufficient time for bringing to maturity his plans of ſeduction or coercion, as circumſtances ſhould make neceſſary. The letter, therefore, was ſent without any alteration; and Sir James, having once more put Mary and Lady Caroline upon an amicable footing together, Mary was, from this period, introduced to company in general, and thrown into a never-ceaſing ſucceſſion of amuſements.

CHAP. IV.

WHAT Sir James had foreſeen ſoon happened. Mary ſcarcely appeared in the world, before ſhe drew around her half the young men of faſhion who compoſed its circles. Her beauty was of that kind which faſcinates, rather than commands. Her large black eyes, ſhadowed by a length of eye-laſh that obſcured their luſtre, caſt modeſtly on the ground.—Her exquiſitely formed Grecian figure, ſhrinking diffidently from obſervation, ſeemed rather to demand protection, than to court applauſe. But as her

her timidity and reſerve wore off by encouragement, her eyes, raiſed to the countenance of thoſe who converſed with her, ſparkled with intelligence, and beamed with underſtanding, while her modeſt vivacity, and arch ſimplicity, joined with an inexpreſſible charm, that was diffuſed over her whole perſon and manner, rendered her irreſiſtibly alluring.

It happened, that the very firſt night in which ſhe appeared in public, ſhe encountered her old lover, Mr. Wynne. From an involuntary impulſe, ſhe ſhrunk at the ſight of him, and caught hold, as if for protection of Lady Caroline's arm.

"What is the matter, child!" ſaid Lady Caroline.

Mary, recollecting herſelf, replied, "Nothing, Madam; I need not fear Mr. Wynne here."

"Nor any where, I hope," ſaid Mr. Wynne, advancing, "will you fear him.—

Accept

Accept, I entreat you, of my contrition, and allow me the honour of your acquaintance."

The contempt Mary felt in her heart was expreſſed in her countenance, and ſhe replied, "Indeed I never wiſhed to be acquainted with you at all."

Lady Caroline, aſtoniſhed and offended by the impoliteneſs of ſuch words to a perſon of Mr. Wynne's appearance, ſaid ſternly, "Mary!" and Mr. Wynne, taking all the encouragement that was contained in the tone of her voice, and addreſſing her with the moſt profound reſpect, ſaid, "I was once, Madam, ſo unfortunate, while unacquainted with the rank Miſs Seabright was deſtined to adorn, as to offend her by a too lively admiration of her charms; and I allow the reſentment that ſhe ſeems to manifeſt to be juſt; but I ſhould hope that my ſincere penitence, and the equally ardent, but more reſpectful regard, which I now feel for her, may ſecure her pardon, and, in ſome degree, recommend me to your favour."

"I know nothing of all this," ſaid Lady Caroline; "but if you are a man of faſhion, Sir, which I cannot doubt, my houſe is open to all ſuch; and you will not find me ſevere in puniſhing a miſtake which is ſo handſomely atoned for."

"My connexions, Madam," returned Mr. Wynne, "are not unknown to you;—Lord L——— will inform you who Mr. Wynne is."

"Mr. Wynne!" ſaid Lady Caroline.—"Wynne of Llantriſſent; my nephew's intimate friend!"

"The very ſame," ſaid Mr. Wynne gaily, "and the ardent admirer of your charming daughter."

"Then pray, Mary, be friends directly," ſaid Lady Caroline; "I will have no reſentment harboured for any little miſtake which happened when you were in a ſituation where it was impoſſible to know what was due to you."

"I was never in a ſituation," returned Mary, "where the reſpect that modeſty demands

demands was not due to me; and I can thank Mr. Wynne very little for a respect that is shewn to my fortune rather than to myself."

"What a little rustic it is," said Lady Caroline: "But you, who know in what a strange situation I was, for so many years, obliged to leave her, and with what strange people she associated, will easily pardon those little asperities in her style and manner, and do your best, I dare say, in assisting me to polish her."

"With all the pleasure in life," returned Mr. Wynne; "I was always desirous to polish her; and she knows very well that I always told her, from the first, that she was not born to blossom and die unseen in the valley of Llamamon."

"Oh! that I had never quitted it!" cried Mary, earnestly, provoked past patience, by the bold effrontery of Mr. Wynne, and the licentious indulgence given by Lady Caroline to every folly that bore the stamp of fashion."

"I will have no exclamations," ſaid Lady Caroline; "ſhe is eternally forgetting that ſhe is not upon the Welch mountains," added ſhe, turning to Mr. Wynne.

"No, indeed, I am not," ſaid Mary.—"There is nothing around me that can lead to ſuch a forgetfulneſs."

Mr. Wynne laughed; and contriving to remain with Lady Caroline during the reſt of the evening, he continued to teaze Mary with his railleries and his aſſiduities; and, by his frequent alluſions to William, and the occurrences that had happened at Llamamon, ſometimes covered her with bluſhes of reſentment, and ſometimes filled her eyes with tears of tender recollection.

From this time Mr. Wynne became the avowed lover of Mary; and he ſoon made ſuch propoſals to Sir James, as he ſuppoſed muſt ſecure him ſucceſs to his wiſhes.—But Sir James's ambition took for his daughter a higher flight; he was reſolved to ally himſelf,

 by

by her means, to nobility; and as, about the ſame time that Mr. Wynne fully explained himſelf, Sir James had alſo received propoſals of marriage for Mary from the Earl of St. Albans, Mr. Wynne was rejected with ſomething leſs ceremony than he thought due to politeneſs, and to a perſon of his conſequence. He alſo affected to conſider himſelf as peculiarly ill uſed, from the encouragement that he loudly declared he had, from the firſt, received from Lady Caroline: And her ill-treatment, added to the ſlights ſhewn him by Sir James, ſtimulated alſo by the contempt and averſion that Mary always manifeſted towards him, raiſed ſuch a ſpirit of reſentment and malevolence, in the miſchief-loving, and revengeful boſom of Mr. Wynne, as awakened all his former deſire of being an inſtrument of evil to her, and all with whom ſhe was connected.

He cared little whether ſhe really perſevered in her partiality to William or not; and he doubted not but that if ſhe did, ſhe would

readily facrifice it to the ambitious views of her parents, and that nothing could be more mortifying, both to her and to them, than the difcovery of the prediлection that fhe had once fo notorioufly entertained for the young farmer. Hence he made it his bufinefs to publifh, every where, all the anecdotes which had come to his knowledge, of the former life of Mary; and fcrupled not to infinuate, that he had declined a connexion with her, to which he had been courted by her parents, from fufpicions the moft injurious to her reputation.

Fortunately, in the certainty of fuccefs, he had made his wifh and defign of marrying her too public, for fuch a calumny to do her any material injury. It ferved, however, to make known her partiality for William; a partiality which the rejection of Mr. Wynne by Sir James, and the cold indifference of Mary to him, and to every man who approached her, ferved to confirm;—the one being imputed to the impoffibility

that Sir James had found of ruling the inclinations of his daughter, and the other to the unconciliatory nature of a pre-engaged heart.

Notwithſtanding this ſuſpicion, Mary had many lovers.—But amongſt them all, the moſt diſtinguiſhed in rank, in fortune, and in perſonal qualities, was the Earl of St. Albans.

He had conceived for her one of thoſe paſſions which no obſtacles can deter from the purſuit of its object, and which no reluctance, or even averſion in the perſon beloved, can turn aſide from attempts after ſelfiſh gratification.

The intoxicating beauty of Mary was a bait which his ſenſes knew not to reſiſt, and her large fortune a prize which his ambition longed to graſp.

From the firſt moment in which he had ſeen her, he had become paſſionately in love, and as he thought the whole world muſt ſee with his eyes, and think with his reaſon, the fear of being prevented had cauſed him to make a much earlier application to Sir James than the ſtrict rules of propriety could warrant. The application was, however, in itſelf, too acceptable to Sir James to meet with a rebuff on that or any other account. Sir James manifeſted the moſt eager acceptance of his propoſals; yet, with a crafty ſincerity, he fully explained to Lord St. Albans the ſtate of his daughter's heart, and revealed every event that had come to his knowledge of her former life.

This information might have alarmed a lover of more delicacy than Lord St. Albans; but with him it only added one ſtimulus more. He perſuaded himſelf he ſhould now be actuated in his purſuit of Mary not only from ſelf-love, but alſo from his deſire to do his part towards ſaving ſo

fine a creature from deſtruction; and while the affections of poor Mary's heart raiſed no impediment to the poſſeſſion of her perſon and fortune, he could not but ſecretly congratulate himſelf that it was poſſeſſed by one from whom, in his intereſt with her parents, he could fear no competition.

"I will not pay myſelf ſo bad a compliment," ſaid he, with no unbecoming vanity, "as to ſuppoſe I am in danger from ſuch a rival, of final rejection from your daughter. A little, a *very* little time, I think I may be allowed to ſay, muſt ſhew her the difference there is between us. It is not poſſible, that with ſo juſt an underſtanding, and ſo true a taſte as appears in all ſhe ſays and does, ſhe ſhould perſiſt in an attachment that muſt be condemned by the one, and muſt ſhock the other. I will truſt myſelf wholly to your kindneſs, my dear Sir, and to my own merits, to make myſelf maſter of your daughter's heart. Do you only promiſe me, that no one ſhall be allowed to

contend the prize with me but this ruſtic;—and although I diſdain the competition, I ſhall have no fear of my ſucceſs."

Sir James readily engaged his moſt active intereſt in a cauſe ſo near his heart, and Lord St. Albans was, from this hour, the conſtant attendant upon Mary in every public place, and an eſtabliſhed inmate of her father's houſe.

To a diſengaged heart, there were perhaps few men who would have appeared more attractive than Lord St. Albans.—He was young, handſome, polite, and inſinuating: His converſation was amuſing, and his temper eaſy. If his character was not ſtrongly marked, neither was there any thing of imbecility in his thoughts or conduct.—He was, it is true, a man who could feel little for any one but himſelf; nor was he very accurate in his ideas of rectitude, or nice in his rule of morals.—Although, when left to himſelf, he would not wander from the

the *common* path of improprieties, trodden almoſt univerſally by all young men of faſhion, yet he ſcrupled not to *follow* others into a more licentious deviation, when no other means occurred for the gratification of his deſires. His maxim ſeemed to be, not to ſuffer any "flower of the ſpring to paſs by him; to fill himſelf with coſtly wine and ointment, and to crown himſelf with roſe buds before they were withered." In a word, he lived wholly to himſelf; and from his earlieſt youth, having never been wanting in the power to obtain all he wiſhed, he dreamed not of ſelf-government, or the duty of moderation; yet, being of a ſocial diſpoſition, in gratifying himſelf, he naturally contributed to the gratification of thoſe with whom he aſſociated; and if his perſonal attractions recommended him to the daughters, his rank and fortune made him equally acceptable to the parents: Lord St. Albans was therefore an univerſal favourite; and there was ſcarcely a ſingle woman in the faſhionable aſſemblies where he appeared,

except

except the one to whom he had attached himſelf, who would not have thought herſelf peculiarly fortunate, in having attracted his attentions.—But what ſeemed his brighteſt perfection in the eyes of moſt, to Mary appeared his greateſt blemiſhes.

Under the poliſh of politeneſs, ſhe diſcovered the rough ſelfiſhneſs of the heart, and in the careleſs ſuavity of manners, ſhe deſcried the unprincipled mind. Offended, too, with the ſarcaſtic tone of ariſtocratic impertinence, bordering upon inſolence, with which he ſpoke of all who moved not in the circle in which he trod, and which ſo ſtrongly pointed out to her reflecting mind in what eſtimation ſhe would herſelf have been held only a few months before, ſhe felt, perhaps, ſomewhat more diſapprobation than reaſon or taſte juſtified, of thoſe manners and awkward graces, which, whatever admiration they might excite in others, *ſhe* could not conſider otherways than as the maſk to conceal the deformity of the mind.

What added force to her diflikes, was the very circumftance which Lord St. Albans' vanity had flattered him, would have conciliated her regard.

To liften to any one with favour who fpoke of love, appeared to Mary a violation of the faith fhe owed to William; and when the fubject was perfifted in, fpite of the difinclination fhe fo evidently manifefted, fhe confidered fuch pertinacity as a violation of the refpect that was due to herfelf.

As Lord St. Albans offended more in this way than any other perfon, fo was Lord St. Albans more difagreeable to Mary than any other. Nor was fhe fcrupulous of marking this diflike, by all the neglect and inattention to his wifhes that lay in her power.

While Lord St. Albans remained aftonifhed, and chagrined with the little progrefs he made in the affections of Mary, the calumnies of Mr. Wynne reached his ears.

That

That kind of courage which leads a man, either with or without a reaſon, to take the life of a fellow-creature, or to hazard his own, was not wanting in the compoſition of Lord St. Albans. He had even ſo much of the ancient chivalry about him, as to think it his duty to ſtand forth in the defence of inſulted beauty in general; how much more, then, in defence of the beauty he adored?—He challenged Mr. Wynne.—They met.—Mr. Wynne received the contents of Lord St. Albans' piſtol in his boſom; he dropped ſenſeleſs on the ground; and Lord St. Albans went coolly to lay his laurels at the feet of Mary.

This action, which appeared to the unſophiſticated mind of Mary in the light of murder, converted her ſimple diſlike of Lord St. Albans into abhorrence, and ſhe thought ſhe muſt have loſt her ſenſes, when ſhe heard Sir James and Lady Caroline calling upon her to teſtify her gratitude to her *defender*,

and found herſelf *congratulated* on the *chaſtiſement* Lord St. Albans had beſtowed upon Mr. Wynne.

She obſerved, however, that in her ſurpriſe and horror, ſhe was ſingular; ſhe ſaw Lord St. Albans unchallenged by the laws of his country; ſhe heard it eſtabliſhed as a rule, that, for certain offences, a *man of honour* has a right to attempt the life of his fellow man, and ſhe was no longer to believe herſelf an inhabitant of the land where wilful and premeditated murder is forbidden by the religion of it, and where the laws aſſign death as the portion of the murderer.

It was indeed only in *wiſh* that Lord St. Albans was criminal to *ſuch* an intent.

Mr. Wynne, after ſeveral weeks of ſevere ſuffering, was reſtored to a precarious and uneaſy exiſtence, which he hoped to prolong, by

by breathing ſome more ſalutary air than that of his native iſland; and for this purpoſe, he was no ſooner able to leave his houſe with ſafety, than he quitted England, as he thought, for ever.

CHAP. V.

THIS incident engaged Mary's mind in reflecting on the duties of others.—She had, for some time before, been busily employed in studying her own.

The doubt that Sir James had impressed, of the rectitude of her adherence to William, had not been heard without solicitude, or passed over with indifference.

It is true, that Mary was very sincerely in love; but she had, from her infancy, been so accustomed

accustomed to connect the ideas of happiness and virtue, that it was not the influence of any passion that could enable her to separate them.—She felt that self-approving heart was as essential to her felicity as even the possession of the man she loved; and she knew, to conviction, that she could neither give nor receive happiness but through the medium of virtue.—Was it then a duty to abandon William, and submit herself to the will of her parents? It was a fearful question, and Mary, with a palpitating heart, set herself to examine it. Too young for a casuist, unschooled and unlettered, she busied herself not with nice distinctions or subtle questions. The manifest injustice she should commit towards William, in reclaiming a heart so freely given, and so repeatedly pledged, furnished her with an irrefragable argument, the most flattering to her wishes; while the absurdity of submitting to *any* other, the choice of the person to whom she was to be bound by the most sacred of obligations,

obligations, and to whom ſhe would be accountable for the moſt arduous of duties, appeared ſo glaringly evident, that ſhe was ſtruck with conviction of her right to decide for herſelf. This right appeared paramount to all others; and ſo far ſhe could reaſon logically as to diſcover, that a duty, which her parents had no right to exact, ſhe could be under no obligation to pay. Thus her mind became eaſy, as to the juſtice of her determination never to give up William.—Much of her *own happineſs* ſhe was bound to ſacrifice to the kindneſs of her parents, might have been another conſideration, had it not been ſuperſeded by the reflection, that ſhe had no right to reſign any part of William's, and that ſhe could not break her engagements with him, without making him miſerable. Here, then, ſhe fixed, to preſerve her faith to her lover inviolate, but to ſoften her oppoſition to the will of her parents, by every affectionate attention, and every dutiful compliance in her power.—The juſtneſs of her reaſoning, ſhe thought, was

allowed

allowed by the promife Sir James had given, that, if fhe continued in her prefent fentiments for twelve months, he would, at the end of that period, confent to her union with William.

Satisfied, then, with herfelf, and relying upon the integrity of Sir James, Mary gave up her mind to the moft delightful vifions of promifed happinefs. For fome time, fhe entertained not a doubt of the good will and indulgence which he had fo largely profeffed. His bland and eafy manners gained both her confidence and her love; and being every day more and more convinced that no affection could ever fubfift between her and Lady Caroline, fhe fought an indemnification for fo heavy a misfortune, by cultivating and indulging the fondeft affection towards her father. The delufion, however, lafted not long. With thofe fhe loved, Mary was as open as day-light.—She dreamt not of difguife; and perpetually repulfed by the feverity and ill humour of Lady Caroline, fhe hung

hung fondly on Sir James, as being the only perſon to whom ſhe could communicate her thoughts. Soon, however, ſhe diſcovered that his was no kindred mind. As ſhe played fondly round him, he would, according to the humour of the moment, ſometimes repulſe, and ſometimes neglect her. As it was difficult to him always to be on his guard, he would alſo ſometimes treat her opinions and manner of thinking with contempt. Sometimes he would ridicule the ruſticity of her notions, and ſometimes he would harſhly condemn them.

Mary, on theſe occaſions, would ſhrink back into herſelf, and longed to wing her way to Llamamon, where alone ſhe thought ſhe could find minds ſimilar to her own.—Added to this, when Sir James beheld the averſion Mary manifeſted towards Lord St. Albans, he not unfrequently loſt patience, and treated her with a tone of authority which gave her a glimpſe into his real intention.

All her former ſuſpicion recurred ;—the overheard converſation was recalled to her mind ; ſhe thought ſhe ſaw the whole of Sir James's paraded kindneſs to her but as parts of that original ſcheme, and ſhe relapſed into diſtruſt and coldneſs.

So far from her ſeeing any probability that ſhe ſhould, at the end of her year of trial, find the indulgence ſhe had been taught to expect, ſhe had every reaſon, ſince the introduction of Lord St. Albans into the family, to believe that a choice was already made for her ; and ſhe every day learnt, by accidental converſation, as well as by expreſs admonition, how monſtrous, and even impoſſible, the connexion was eſteemed, which ſhe wiſhed to form. The deſigns of Sir James and Lady Caroline became every hour more plain ; and the veil, which ſeemed ſtill deſigned to cover them, was become too tranſparent not to be ſeen through. Mary was at length fully convinced that ſhe had been duped.

Shocked and offended by the duplicity with which ſhe had been treated, ſhe loſt, at the ſame moment, all remains of affection for Sir James, and all confidence in what he ſaid.

Reaſoning from particulars to generals, ſhe ſaw nothing in the manners of thoſe by whom ſhe was ſurrounded but the ſame ſpecious kindneſs, and the ſame real hard heartedneſs, by which ſhe had been deceived by Sir James.

Diſguſted by an affectation of compliance, which her experience had taught her to conſider as the cloak of ſelfiſhneſs, her mind revolted from the artificial manners, and the ſtudied graces of thoſe who ſeemed to conſider themſelves as the firſt of human beings. Offended by the diſtinction that they arrogated to themſelves, and recollecting how widely they differed from all that ſhe had been taught to conſider as the exemplars of what is good and amiable in the human mind,

mind, ſhe became not more enamoured of the life and ſociety ſhe had left, from the preference that ſhe gave to its ſimple and innocent pleaſures, than from the poſitive diſapprobation and ardent diſlike that ſhe felt to the licentious principles and expreſſive amazements that marked the mind and taſte of thoſe with whom ſhe now aſſociated.

She had been taught to conſider an avarice of time as the key ſtone of every virtue, the inſtrument by which every duty was to be performed. Here ſhe ſaw the moſt laviſh waſte of moments that would return no more, and ſaw hours and days ſhamefully miſuſed, which were to be reckoned for in the ſtrict account to which ſhe had been accuſtomed to believe every one would ſometime be called. She was herſelf compelled to take her ſhare in an idleneſs that her heart thus warmly condemned; and ſince her leſſons had been ſuſpended, there was ſcarcely an hour in any one day on which ſhe could look back with ſatisfaction, much leſs with applauſe.

applause. In associating with those of her own age, the gaiety natural to her disposition, and her time of life, led her to partake, with fervour, of the amusements that were offered to her, but she was shocked with the lightness of their principles, and wearied with the vacuity of their conversation. Unaccustomed to the details of dress and gallantry, she had no relish for such topics; and she found, with amazement, that the young talked of nothing else. In the scandal of the day, she was still less interested; and while it opened scenes which served to confirm her in her aversion to the way of life to which her parents wished to devote her, it justified, in her opinion, the resolution she had taken, never to submit to such a degradation of existence. When she looked around her, and listened to the opinions she heard, and reflected on the actions to which she was witness, she could scarcely persuade herself she was in a society of Christians; and since the adventure of Lord St. Albans with Mr. Wynne, she hesitated not to pronounce that

ſhe was not. Every rule which ſhe had been taught to conſider as ſacred, was violated; every principle that ſhe conſidered as incontrovertible, was diſputed. She was often covered with confuſion, by the converſation ſhe heard from the mouths of women to whom every body ſeemed to look up;—and ſhe was often ſtruck dumb with aſtoniſhment, on finding connexions avowed, the bare ſuſpicion of which, ſhe had ſuppoſed, muſt overwhelm the parties concerned with ſhame. She heard much in the praiſe of humanity and benevolence; but ſhe ſaw the moſt criminal inattention, both to the ſouls and bodies of the dependants of thoſe who made theſe harangues, and the moſt laviſh miſuſe of thoſe fortunes which could alone relieve the wants that appeared to be ſo feelingly deplored.

"No, never, never," ſaid Mary, "will I ſo waſte my time, my faculties, and my property."

Thus ill had ſucceeded Sir James's plan to corrupt the heart, and to falſify the taſte, of Mary. All ſhe ſaw and heard ſerved but to confirm her in the affections and the choice of her earlieſt years; and it was by having become intimately acquainted with the ſplendid nothingneſs and vicious idleneſs of the great world, that ſhe was led, both by the election of her heart, and the conviction of her reaſon, unalterably to decide in preference of the virtuous and rational delights of a life ſpent in uſeful occupations, and healthful induſtry.

"William," ſaid ſhe, "ſhall not be idle, even if my father ſhould make us rich. If he work not for himſelf, he ſhall work for others. Every hour in each day ſhall have its occupation. I ſhould die with grief, were I to ſee him imitate thoſe arrogant men of faſhion, who think themſelves ſo much above him."

"We

"We are eſtimable," would ſhe ſometimes think, "only in proportion as we are uſeful. What eſteem is there due to thoſe who live wholly to themſelves, and who benefit others but by chance, and becauſe they cannot otherways ſupply ſufficient means for their own gratifications?"

CHAP. VI.

WITH thoſe ſentiments, which every day's obſervation ſtrengthened in the mind of Mary, it is not to be wondered at if Lord St. Albans made no progreſs in her heart.—Every day ſhe teſtified more contempt and diſlike of him. Sir James found his calculations falſe, and Lord St. Albans beheld his vanity confounded. It was evident to both, that to proceed in the path they were in, was but to ſtray farther from their point; yet could not Sir James reſolve to give up the Earl as his ſon-in-law; nor could Lord

St.

St. Albans consent to resign Mary. Lady Caroline urged vehemently, and Sir James consented to try its effect.

He told Mary to consider Lord St. Albans as her future husband, and threatened her with the harshest consequences of his displeasure, should she venture to reject him. Mary pleaded the promise that had been made her, and found herself treated with ridicule for having relied upon an engagement that it was asserted it was impossible to fulfil.

"By such an expedient," said Sir James, "I gave you an opportunity of arrogating to yourself all the merit of a change in your sentiments, and of a return to propriety.— You had it in your power to convince the whole world, even more than Lord St. Alban's successful sword had done, that the reproaches of Mr. Wynne proceeded alone from his malice; and you owed such advantages to my indulgence and good management; but, by your conduct to Lord St.

St. Albans, you daily confirm the ſtigma that unworthy man endeavoured to fix upon your name. It hence becomes my duty to take care, by announcing to the world that you are deſtined to become the wife of Lord St. Albans, to wipe off this reproach, and to convince the moſt incredulous that you are thought worthy of the rank to which you were born."

Mary heard this declaration with more indignation than ſurpriſe.

"It is evident," ſaid ſhe, "that I have been deluded :—" But be aſſured, Sir, that neither calumny nor murder are the ways to ſubdue my reſolution.—My future life ſhall be the vindication of that which is paſt ;—and the faith with which I will keep my obligations to William, a proof that I am incapable of breaking thoſe which I owe to myſelf."

"Yet," ſaid Sir James, ſcornfully, "you will be the wife of Lord St. Albans."

"Never!"

"Never!" replied Mary, firmly; "but I beſeech you, oh! my father, not to compel me into a ſturdineſs of oppoſition ill ſuited to the character of a daughter."

"Obedience, unqualified obedience," ſaid Sir James, "is the duty of a daughter, and it is that which I exact from you."

This declaration called for ſome conſideration on the part of Mary. It ſeemed to abſolve her from the promiſe ſhe had made, to break off all intercourſe with William, ſince it revoked the condition upon which alone ſhe had given it. Was it then neceſſary that ſhe ſhould take any ſtep in conſequence of being thus at liberty? After all the reflection ſhe could make, ſhe reſolved in the negative. She found herſelf in no other ſituation than that in which ſhe had declared her reſolution to William not to become his wife until ſhe was twenty-one, and ſhe determined to adhere to this reſolution.

Notwithſtanding Sir James's threats, ſhe feared little from any force that might be attempted to be put upon her inclination, and ſtill leſs from any controul upon her actions. She thought it impoſſible that ſhe ſhould be married to Lord St. Albans againſt her will, and doubted not the ſtrength of her conſtancy. Thus confirming herſelf in her attachment to William, and endeavouring to ſnatch every advantage, in point of inſtruction, that her preſent ſituation afforded her, Mary reſumed that calm tenor of mind, and patient waiting-for of better days, from which the falſe and inſiduous profeſſions of indulgence and love, ſo laviſhly made uſe of by Sir James, had arouſed her only a few weeks before.

In the mean time, her attachment to William was become publicly and generally known; and as ſhe conſidered herſelf as no longer under any probation, ſhe did not, when challenged on the ſubject by her young companions, diſavow it. Thus her love for the

the young peaſant made the diſcourſe of every ſociety to which ſhe was known; but ſhe was herſelf unconſcious of the degree of cenſure ſhe incurred, the wonder ſhe excited, and the concluſions that were drawn, as to her principles and character, from an attachment, that, in the eyes of the great and polite world, appeared ſo monſtrous and unnatural.

Mothers conſidered Lady Caroline as the object of the moſt ſincere compaſſion, proteſting, that were they in her place, they ſhould not know where to hide their heads for very ſhame. "They could forgive an imprudent paſſion, where there was only diſparity of fortune, but diſparity of rank! for ſuch an enormity there could be no pardon." Some more charitable deſired it might be remembered, that when the attachment began, there was no ſuch diſparity known to ſubſiſt; that manners, habits, and education, were the ſame: The commencement of the affection was therefore excuſable;—

 but

but the continuance of it! What charity could find an apology for ſuch a dereliction of all grandeur of ſentiment?

There were, however, general criticiſms, and they were made by thoſe who had no ſelf-intereſt in the good or ill conduct of Mary; but there was one individual of her acquaintance who not only heard her ſtory with indulgence, but alſo flattered herſelf ſhe might be able to reap ſome perſonal advantage from her ſuppoſed principles. This was Lady Harriet Forteſcue, the thirteenth child of the Earl of B———.

Lady Harriet was good humoured, lively, and indiſcreet. There ſubſiſted between Lady B——— and Lady Caroline a cloſe intimacy, and the young ladies had become extremely intimate, from the firſt of Mary's appearance in the great world.

Lady Harriet had ſpent a part of the preceding ſummer at Brighton, and had there formed

formed an attachment to a younger ſon of a gentleman, who, like Lord B———, had a numerous family, and no very large income.

The young man was deſtined for the profeſſion of the law; but having, from his nurſery, been accuſtomed only to ſcenes of diſſipation and indulgence, he was almoſt as incapable of the application, and perſeverance neceſſary even to a tolerable ſucceſs in his profeſſion, as he was diſinclined to them.

He had, however, talents much more attractive in the eyes of Lady Harriet.—He ſung well, danced to admiration, and underſtood the ſcience of ſmall talk better than any of his cotemporaries. Lady Harriet had beauty, and he felt its power.—Lady Harriet had vanity, and was pleaſed with her conqueſt. They mutually believed themſelves in love, and they ſoon found, that even a paſſion, viſionary as theirs, was not without its ſorrows.

 The

The fathers and mothers, on both ſides, declared their union impoſſible, and the young gentleman was ordered to attend to his chambers, and the young lady to her maſters. But it is eaſier to command than to obey; and Lady Harriet and her lover were neither of them inclined to give themſelves much trouble. They therefore continued to ſubſiſt on ſide glances, private *billet-doux*, and ſometimes ſtölen interviews.—Sometimes they talked of waiting for more favourable times, and ſometimes they reſolved not to waſte their lives in fruitleſs expectation, while there was a chaiſe and four to be had in the metropolis, and a charitable blackſmith to be found at Gretna Green.

But Lady Harriet was at the bottom a coward. It is true ſhe liked Mr. Wilmot better than any of the other men who flattered her; but ſhe liked the eaſe and ſplendor of life ſtill better than ſhe liked Mr. Wilmot. The eclat, however, of an elopement, with

with the honour resulting from a noble disdain, of all pecuniary considerations, had their charms for her, and she wanted but a little encouragement to induce her to take a step, which, had she taken, she would have repented every hour of her life afterwards.

This encouragement she expected to receive from Mary, and therefore cultivated her friendship with the greatest assiduity.

"I am engaged every day in your defence, my dear Mary," said she one day to her, as they were alone together; "the world is so stupidly avaricious, that there is not to be found one person in a hundred who can conceive the merit and pleasure of sacrificing all for love."

"I am obliged to you for your kindness," returned Mary; "but I do not know what part of my conduct wants a defence."

"Not with me, my dear," said Lady Harriet; "I adore your spirit; though I must acknowledge I should have more to say

in your favour, if your ſwain were a gentleman."

"Does all this refer to my affection for William?" aſked Mary, gravely.

"To what elſe can it refer, my dear?" replied Lady Harriet; "you muſt be ſenſible that your paſſion for a farmer's ſon is a little out of rule for a perſon of your birth and fortune; but to be ſure you have a right to chuſe for yourſelf, as we all have; and I ſuppoſe he is divinely handſome.—I would give the world to ſee him."

"He would probably diſappoint your expectations," ſaid Mary, coolly, and piqued. "But pray what is there out of rule, as you call it, in my attachment to a perſon who was once as much my ſuperior in fortune, as he will always be my equal, *at leaſt* in every valuable quality of the heart and underſtanding."

"Lord, my dear," returned Lady Harriet, "is he not a farmer's ſon? a perſon whom nobody knows? And are not you the grand-daughter of an Earl? and allied to

ſome

ſome of the firſt families in the kingdom, and may have a hundred thouſand pounds for your fortune, for any thing I know?—Such a thing was never heard of. It is a little prepoſterous, to be ſure. If he had been a gentleman, indeed—a perſon of any education——."

"His education was more than equal to mine," ſaid Mary; "and if being a gentleman means a perſon of gentle manners, one who never willingly gives offence, and who ſtudiouſly does all he can to oblige and pleaſe; who is never at eaſe himſelf, while he ſees others in pain; and who thinks nothing burthenſome which can contribute to their relief; if this is to be a gentleman, William is as much a gentleman as any man in the kingdom: But if it mean, as the examples I ſee every day lead me to believe, one who makes no ſcruple of ſtareing modeſty out of countenance, who loiters about inattentive to the wants and wiſhes of thoſe about him; who ſacrifices the conveniences of others to his own whims, and who ſeems

to

to dread the exertion of raiſing a chair from the ground, or the labour of ringing a bell; then I confeſs William is no gentleman;—and I am heartily glad he is not."

"To be ſure," ſaid Lady Harriet, "the men are inſufferably idle; but how oddly you talk! One ſhould think you did not know what a gentleman is."

"Indeed I do not," ſaid Mary.

"Lord bleſs me!" cried Lady Harriet; "why a gentleman—a gentleman is a perſon deſcended from an ancient family, to be ſure."

"An ancient family?" ſaid Mary; "I thought all families were *equally* ancient."

"I never heard the like," ſaid Lady Harriet: "A gentleman is one who knows who his anceſtors have been hundreds and hundreds of years."

"And is it the ſame with a gentlewoman?" aſked Mary.

"To be ſure," returned Lady Harriet.

"Then when I lived at dear Llamamon," ſaid Mary, "and thought myſelf the

daughter

daughter of Richard and Eleanor, I was no gentlewoman?"

"Dear, yes, you were," ſaid Lady Harriet; "juſt the ſame; only you did not know it."

"I thought you ſaid," replied Mary, "that being a gentlewoman conſiſted in *knowing* who our anceſtors had been for hundreds and hundreds of years."

"Bleſs me, there's no talking to you," ſaid Lady Harriet; "I know what I mean. A gentleman is——is——is a gentleman."

"So I believe," returned Mary; "and William is William; "and hitherto you have not brought any very convincing argument, that there is any thing very prepoſterous in loving him."

"*I*, my dear?" cried Lady Harriet.—"Oh! no, I am quite of your mind; only I can't help wiſhing him a gentleman, that the thing might not be quite ſo odd; but I aſſure you I think you quite right; and to tell you the truth, I believe I ſhall follow your example."

 "Indeed!"

"Indeed!" ſaid Mary; "have you then "a William in a corner?"

"No, not a William," ſaid Lady Harriet; "my friend is a gentleman, and I am come to aſk your advice, for I am ſure you will be of my opinion."

"Are you quite ſure of that?" aſked Mary.

"How can it be otherways?" ſaid Lady Harriet.—"You are reſolved to marry William in ſpite of all that your friends and relations can ſay to the contrary; and will not you adviſe me to marry Mr. Wilmot, let mine do what they will to prevent it?"

"Why ſhould they prevent you?" ſaid Mary.

"Oh! the old ſtory," returned Lady Harriet; "becauſe dear Wilmot is poor, and you know Lord B——— is not rich, and we are thirteen brothers and ſiſters, and ſo they ſay we ſhall ſtarve if we marry.—But I don't mind ſtarving—Do you?"

"Indeed I do," ſaid Mary.

"Why;

"Why; do you think Sir James will give you any thing, if you marry William?" ſaid Lady Harriet."

"Not a ſixpence," returned Mary.

"Then you muſt ſtarve," replied Lady Harriet.

"That does not follow," replied Mary; "William knows how to manage a farm, and I can ſpin, and underſtand a dairy."

"Well, I dare ſay I could ſpin," ſaid Lady Harriet; "for you know it is very faſhionable.—And as to a dairy, it is quite my delight.—You can't think what a beautiful one mamma has in the country: But then I am afraid Mr. Wilmot knows nothing about farming; but he might ſoon learn; for all gentlemen are farmers now a days."

"And you can riſe with the ſun," ſaid Mary; "make your own butter and cheeſe; breakfaſt upon boiled milk; dine upon beans and bacon: and go to bed by day-light?"

"Bleſs me, no!" ſaid Lady Harriet;—"how can you talk of ſuch horrid things?"

"Becauſe

" Becaufe they are the things I muft do, when I marry William," faid Mary, " and what you muft do, if you perfuade Mr. Wilmot to turn farmer."

" There can be no occafion," faid Lady Harriet; " I am fure I know a great many ladies that have dairies, and do nothing at all like it."

" And thofe ladies keep themfelves and their families from the profits of their dairies?" faid Mary.

" No, they have eftates befides," returned Lady Harriet; " but I always hear them fay that their dairies anfwer, and are very profitable."

" But I take it," replied Mary, " that you and I fhall have no eftates; and that, if we keep our dairies as thofe ladies do, we fhall run the chance of ftarving, which you feem to think a very pleafant expectation."

" No, indeed, that's not it," faid Lady Harriet; " but to tell you the truth, I don't fuppofe that either papa or old Mr.

Wilmot

Wilmot will let us ſtarve; and when we are once married, they muſt ſupport us."

"And who is to ſupport your brothers and ſiſters," ſaid Mary, "if they all follow your example? Or would you have Lord B——— take from his dutiful children, and give to thoſe who are undutiful?"

"Well," ſaid Lady Harriet, "who would have thought this? *You* preach obedience, Mary!"

"I preach honeſty," ſaid Mary; "and if I were to ſay I give an example of it in my conduct towards William, I think I ſhould not ſay more than is true. I have heard you ſay, Lady Harriet, that Lord B——— can only give you five thouſand pounds. Mr. Wilmot, you ſay, is poor.— Can you live upon his poverty, and your five thouſand pounds?"

"Why *you*," ſaid Lady Harriet, "talk of living with William, and won't have any thing like it."

"But I can work hard, and live hard," ſaid Mary; "neither of which can you."

"No,"

"No," returned Lady Harriet; "I was not born to it."

"Then," ſaid Mary, "you are not independent enough to have a right to pleaſe yourſelf.—You were not born to work, you ſay, it is true; you were born——forgive me, my dear Harriet, a poor gentlewoman;—a moſt uſeleſs, helpleſs being. Nay, you were born ſomething worſe, in as much as you were born to a title, which is one ſhackle the more upon your natural abilities. If you had been born poor in a cottage, you would have known how to have got your own living; but being born poor in a caſtle, you muſt depend upon the charity of others."

"Depend upon charity, Mary!" ſaid Lady Harriet;—"what do you mean by that?"

"Did you not ſay juſt now," returned Mary, "that if you married Mr. Wilmot, Lord B——— and old Mr. Wilmot would be obliged to ſupport you? I can marry William,

William, and be obliged to nobody but myſelf for my ſupport."

"I am ſure," ſaid Lady Harriet, "I have always been told that high birth is a great advantage, and that, with the addition of a good education, it would ſupply the place of fortune."

"A good education," returned Mary, "will indeed ſupply the place of fortune, and make the accident of birth inſignificant. But that education is good which fits us beſt for our ſtations in life. You have been educated for a fine lady, and will find yourſelf terribly at a loſs where fine lady qualifications are of no uſe."

"Dear, you miſtake the matter quite," ſaid Lady Harriet.—"You are not to ſuppoſe that I have not been taught economy. I can make up all my own millinery; and I know how to ornament a houſe at a trifle of expence."

"What will theſe talents avail you," ſaid Mary, "when you have no millinery to make

up,

up, and no houſe that will admit of ornament?"

"But if I marry Mr. Wilmot," ſaid Lady Harriet, "after papa has forgiven us, we ſhall have a houſe; and without injuring my brothers and ſiſters, I dare ſay he can get Mr. Wilmot a place where there is nothing to do; for you know we are all on the right ſide, and then all will be very well."

"And ſo," cried Mary, "William and I are to work harder and harder to pay the taxes that are to furniſh a place for you and Mr. Wilmot, where there is nothing to do! and yet you ſuppoſe you do not depend upon the charity of others! But ſurely you do, and upon their induſtry too."

"Nay, Mary," returned Lady Harriet, "if you talk politics, I have done. I wonder where you get all theſe ſtrange never before heard of notions."

"By making uſe of my eyes, ears, and underſtanding," replied Mary, "and by liſtening to the wiſdom of my dear Mr. Ellis."

"Then,

"Then, after all," ſaid Lady Harriet, "you would not adviſe me to marry Mr. Wilmot?"

"Not," ſaid Mary, "except you can live upon his profeſſion, and your five thouſand pounds, without encroaching upon the rights of your brothers and ſiſters, or making William and me contribute to keep you."

"You put things together very ſtrangely," ſaid Lady Harriet; "but to be ſure we could never live upon ſo little.—Why, I ſpend more than half ſuch an income in my dreſs; and I am ſure I am very economical too. But I begin to think it will be beſt to break off in time; for I ſhould hate the thoughts of being unjuſt; nor could I bear to be ſo very poor.—And beſides, Mr. Wilmot would not like it himſelf; and then, perhaps, we might quarrel; ſo I am reſolved I will give him his *congé*.—But who would have thought that *you* would have converted me?"

Some few days after this converſation, Lady Harriet received propoſals of marriage from a young nobleman of large fortune.— She accepted the offer with great pleaſure, and told every body that it was owing to Miſs Seabright that ſhe did not run away with Mr. Wilmot, and that ſhe was the happieſt woman in the world with Lord Delville.

CHAP.

CHAP. VII

WHILE Mary's advice to Lady Harriot, oppoſed to her own conduct, drew upon her, from moſt people, the charge of inconſiſtency, it procured for her the conſideration of a perſon, whom ſhe had long regarded with reſpect and admiration; and it ſerved to draw ſtill tighter the bonds of friendſhip, which were already formed between her and a young lady about her own age.

Although, as moſt of Lady Caroline's connexions, and all her favourite lines of intimacy

intimacy lay amongſt people of the firſt rank and faſhion, Mary had drawn her obſervations upon life and manners moſtly from that polluted ſource, yet, as it *unhappily* happens in England, that all degrees and ranks edge ſo cloſely on each other, as ſometimes to intermingle, Lady Caroline herſelf, with all her ariſtocratic prejudices, and all her arrogant pretenſions to excluſive conſequence, was ſometimes compelled to appear in ſocieties which ſhe conſidered as of a lower order, however diſtinguiſhed by their virtue, their ſenſe, and the urbanity and politeneſs of their manners.

Still farther, to mortify her pride, ſhe could not conceal, either from herſelf or the world, that ſome of thoſe who partook of her own blood made a part of theſe ſocieties;—nor could ſhe preciſely mark the line in her family, where it flowed pure, and where it was mingled with a more ignoble ſtream.—She generally, however, confined to her own perſonal viſits to ſuch ſtreets and ſquares as

we

we have marked with the ſtamp of *faſhion* ;—or if ſhe deviated from this rule, it was in favour of thoſe few of the nobility, who, having had fixed reſidences before this ſtamp was eſtabliſhed, gave ſufficient dignity to plebeian ſtations to intitle them to her notice. As to the reſt of thoſe, to whom, perhaps, her civilities were much more due, ſhe declared ſhe believed them "the beſt people in the world; but that really they lived at ſo unconſcionable a diſtance, and in ſuch ſtrange out of the way places, that ſhe had neither time to viſit them, nor courage to encounter the obſtacles that lay in her way."

There was, however, one exception to this maxim, that, in ſpite of herſelf, ſhe was obliged to make.

A relation of her mother's had been bred to the law.—He was at once the ornament of his profeſſion, and of human nature. He had married a woman diſtinguiſhed alike for her underſtanding, her excellence, and the

agreeablenefs of her talents. Her birth and connexions were fuch, as even the pride of Lady Caroline was obliged to refpect. She united in her favour the fuffrage of people of the firft fafhion, of the moft exalted underftandings, and of the moft fcrupulous morals.

Many boafted of her acquaintance, who were fcarcely intitled to courtfey to her in public; and all who poffeffed it confidered it as the fource of fome of their beft pleafures. There were diftinctions that Lady Caroline could not deny; for they were fanctioned equally by the voice of fafhion and of truth. What then could make it difficult or irkfome to Lady Caroline to vifit Mrs. Elliot?——Mrs. Elliot lived in Bloomfbury.

This weighty impediment to Lady Caroline's appearing at her houfe, would probably never have been gotten over, had not fhe been drawn thither by a motive much more powerful than any relifh which fhe had for a

ſociety, which was in fact too good to be her taſte. This motive was not the fear of *being* ungrateful, but of being *ſtigmatized* with ingratitude.

Mrs. Elliot was a perſon too well known, and of too much *real* conſequence to be *ungratefully* neglected without drawing opprobrium on the perſon who neglected her ;—and Lady Caroline's obligations to her had been too public to give her reaſon to hope ſhe ſhould eſcape cenſure, were ſhe to fail in every attention to her benefactor now in her power.

Mrs. Elliot alone, of all Lady Caroline's connexions, had been aſſiſtant to her in her diſtreſs previous to her voyage to India, and ſhe had been the means of reconciling her to her family on her return. The one obligation was too notorious, and the other too recent, to ſuffer Lady Caroline, with impunity, to appear forgetful of either. She had

 therefore

therefore talked oſtentatiouſly of her gratitude, and the *eternal* remembrance ſhe ſhould retain of the favours done her. For theſe reaſons, Mary had been introduced at Mrs. Elliot's on her arrival in town; and from the firſt, ſhe had found the ſociety ſhe had there met with peculiarly attractive. It was indeed a ſociety that charmed all ages.—Dullneſs, that fiend, who, with hovering wings, ſo frequently damps all attempts towards gaiety, even in the moſt brilliant aſſemblies, never found its entrance within Mrs. Elliot's walls.—Unincumbered by the trappings of vanity, uncontaminated by the allay of vice, pleaſure here appeared in its genuine form, and native purity. Eaſe and gaiety were its handmaids, and reflection, free from ſelf-reproach, its follower. It was here that converſation aſſerted its rightful claims, and became, what it was meant to be, the firſt delight of rational creatures.—People, accuſtomed to be hurried by the tyranny of habit, from one place of amuſement to another, were aſtoniſhed to behold Mrs. Elliot,

Elliot, without effort, poſſeſs, and communicate that pleaſure which they, with ſo fruitleſs a labour, were perpetually ſeeking, but could never find. The queſtion was continually aſked, "How can you find the means to detain ſo many agreeable people around you?" And the obſervation continually made, "Nobody has ſuch good ſociety as Mrs. Elliot."—"Nobody but Mrs. Elliot can live with thoſe they like."

Mrs. Elliot would often reply, "You might all do as much, if you would; but if it is neceſſary to you to be at ten different places in a night, you cannot expect to enjoy yourſelves in any. My whole ſecret conſiſts in knowing when I am well."

No where did Mary dance with half ſo much delight, as at Mrs. Elliot's: No where did ſhe liſten to converſation (and ſometimes as diffidently take a part in it) with ſo much reliſh and improvement as there. With Mrs. Elliot herſelf, ſhe was inexpreſſibly

 charmed.

charmed. She ſeemed to her the prototype of all ſhe could herſelf wiſh to be: Yet ſhe felt ſo ſenſibly the diſtance which Mrs. Elliot's talents and merit put between them, that perhaps ſhe, of all thoſe to whom Mary had been introduced, was the one with whom ſhe had leaſt familiarized herſelf. Mrs. Elliot's temper, although more than commonly kind, was not of that facile ſort which beſtows indulgence alike on all. Merit or talents were neceſſary to engage her admiration, or ſecure her love. Tolerant to all, ſhe yet ſuffered not the inſolent or careleſs to paſs unrepreſſed or unadmoniſhed.—Hence thoſe who frequented her ſociety found it neceſſary to regulate their manners by the dictates of good taſte, and the reſtraints of propriety. Mary ſaw that ſhe could not hope for the favour of Mrs. Elliot without deſerving it; and diffident of herſelf, ſhe miſtruſted her own powers as to making ſo deſirable an acquiſition.

Mrs. Elliot neither liked nor approved Lady Caroline; and the ſtory of Mary's pertinacious attachment to William having reached her ears, with circumſtances very diſadvantageous to Mary, Mrs. Elliot made no advances that could encourage her to more openneſs. She thought ſhe obſerved in Mrs. Elliot leſs kindneſs to her than to the other young people who aſſembled at her houſe; and the idea that ſhe was diſapproved by a perſon of whom ſhe had ſo high an opinion, ſeemed to her as a condemnation, and leſſened her courage in laying claim to her attentions.

Mary's beauty, and the ſweetneſs of her manners, had, notwithſtanding, made her very conſpicuous in Mrs. Elliot's aſſemblies. Mr. Elliot, who was accuſtomed to talk much to the younger part of the ſociety, ſoon diſcovered the uncommon excellence of her underſtanding, and encouraged an intimacy between her and a niece of his own, who was at preſent with Mrs. Elliot.

Anna united the kindeſt heart, and the beſt diſpoſition it was poſſible for a human creature to poſſeſs; but ſhe had ſlow parts, and much indolence of mind. Mr. Elliot hoped, that the ſuperior genius, and active energy of Mary, migh excite Anna to greater exertion; and Anna, enamoured of talents, which, though ſhe deſpaired to rival, ſhe was incapable of envying, became ſincerely and warmly attached to Mary. Mary, on her part, found in Anna a virtue ſo genuine, and a kindneſs ſo ſincere, that ſhe ſoon preferred her company to that of every other young perſon with whom ſhe was acquainted, and conceived for her the moſt ſincere affection. But the two friends had to combat with the prepoſſeſſions of Mrs. Elliot, all in disfavour of poor Mary; and as Anna was not formed to be a very powerful advocate, ſhe was, for ſome time, able to make but ſmall progreſs in her own opinion.

It happened that Anna was well-known to Lady Harriet Forteſcue, and to her ſhe had detailed

detailed the converſation ſhe had had with Mary, and the conſequences of that converſation to herſelf. Anna had repeated all this to Mrs. Elliot, and ſhe had found ſomething ſo unuſual, conſidering Mary's ſituation, and her ſuppoſed partiality to William, in the turn of thought diſplayed in this converſation, that ſhe had been led, from that time, to converſe more freely with her.

It was impoſſible to do ſo without diſcovering the excellence of her principles, and the ſoundneſs of her underſtanding. Joined to theſe, there was in Mary a gaiety of diſpoſition, and a talent for amuſement, always peculiarly agreeable to Mrs. Elliot, wherever ſhe found them. Every important objection to Mary's character being done away in Mrs. Elliot's opinion, ſhe became almoſt faſcinated by the natural graces of her converſation and manners; while Mary, from the indulgence with which ſhe was now treated, finding all fear and reſerve diſſipated, availed herſelf of the advantages reſulting from a free

intercourſe with ſo diſtinguiſhed a perſon as Mrs. Elliot, and found the good ariſing from it incalculable.

One of the moſt valuable of Mrs. Elliot's talents was the addreſs, with which ſhe united the moſt perfect frankneſs, with the tendereſt reſpect for the feelings of others. No one, who converſed with her, could be ignorant of her real ſentiments; but no one could be offended by her manner of diſcovering them. To the young, with whom ſhe was intimate, ſhe never omitted intimating the failings ſhe obſerved in their conduct, but in ſuch a way as to excite apprehenſion only in thoſe who wiſhed not to be corrected. Mary, who loved inſtruction, and panted after perfection, knew how to take leſſons even from the turn of Mrs. Elliot's eye:— Hence ſhe formed herſelf from her example, and emulated her virtues; and thus ſcarcely a day paſſed that ſhe did not add ſomething to her own.

The

The partiality that Mary expreſſed for Mrs. Elliot, and the ſociety ſhe met with at her houſe, was highly diſpleaſing to Lady Caroline.

"In every thing," cried ſhe, "you diſcover the meanneſs of your taſte. Mrs. Elliot, it is true, is a very reſpectable perſon; but with whom does ſhe chiefly aſſociate? A parcel of vulgar lawyers and their wives; people whom one ſees no where elſe."

"True," returned Mary, with humility in her tone, but ſatire in her heart, "they *are* a ſort of people whom we ſee no where elſe."

"I recommended Lady Seymour to your notice and imitation," ſaid Lady Caroline; "ſince you muſt pretend to underſtand good converſation, where will you find it in ſuch perfection as at her houſe, and at her ſuppers?"

"It is a converſation," replied Mary, "to which I am not equal."

"Pray

"Pray what do you mean to object to?" said Lady Caroline, "with your mock modesty."

"Why should I make you angry?" said Mary.—"But would you *indeed* wish me to imitate Lady Seymour's manners and conversation?"

"There's another blessed effect of your vulgar prejudices," said Lady Caroline;—"I understand your insinuation.—You good people are so mightily censorious.—Pray, Mrs. Nicety, to what do you object in Lady Seymour's manners and conversation?"

"In her manners," said Mary, warmly, "her avowed connexion with Mr. Stanhope.—In her conversation, an indelicacy that covers me with confusion."

"Oh! you are prodigiously understanding," said Lady Caroline; "and what impropriety does your superior wisdom see in what you are pleased to call her connexion with Mr. Stanhope? Is he not the friend of Lord Seymour? Is not Lord Seymour admitted to all Lady Seymour's parties. If

he

he sees nothing to disapprove in her conduct, does it become you, child, to be her censor?"

"No, indeed," said Mary, modestly, "it does *not* become me; nor do I mean to be so; but I cannot be inattentive to what I see; I cannot be insensible to the observation I have heard made a hundred times, that the ease with which Lord Seymour seems to view his wife's behaviour, only shews that the depravity has a wider range."

"That's one of your Bloomsbury observations," cried Lady Caroline; "I must put an end to your visitings there."

"Pardon me," said Mary; "it is the observation of those who are not perhaps intitled to throw the first stone, even at Lady Seymour.—In Bloomsbury they talk of things, not persons, Madam."

"Are you really so stupid," cried Lady Caroline, "as to find no amusement in the conversation you hear at Lady Seymour's."

"I do not say so," returned Mary: "On the contrary, I often find it highly amusing.

But that muſt be when I can liſten to it, which is indeed far from being the caſe at all times."

"And then," ſaid Lady Caroline, "I ſee you gazing at the pictures as if you had forgotten that there was any body in the room, or counting the ſticks of your fan, like an idiot."

"And happy am I if, by ſuch expedients," cried Mary, "I can eſcape from being made a party in a dialogue, that I really think it would become no young woman to join in."

Lady Caroline gave Mary a look of ineffable contempt, and bade her prepare to ſup that evening at Lady Seymour's.

CHAP.

CHAP. VIII.

WHILE the events and obſervations of every day were ſtrengthening Mary in her predilection for a life of honeſt induſtry, and rational amuſement, in preference to the ſplendid frivolouſneſs and licentious indulgences of high bred idleneſs, ſhe remained wholly ignorant of the ſentiments and occupations of William. She had hitherto received no reply to the letter ſhe had written to him; and ſhe conſidered his ſilence as an acquieſcence in the reſolution ſhe had announced to him.—She could not wiſh this otherways;

otherways; but importuned and wearied as she was daily by the assiduities of Lord St. Albans, and the life she was compelled to lead, she found this total interruption of intercourse with all whom her heart best loved, and her reason best approved, almost insupportably irksome.

It was therefore, with no common degree of consolation and joy, that one day, on removing a box that stood upon her dressing-table, she beheld a letter, directed in the hand-writing of William.

With an eagerness, that she had scarcely ever felt before, she tore it open; but she had hardly read three lines before her joy was converted into sadness; and the tears that fell in streams from her eyes, defeated her desire of reading to the end. These were the contents:

"If

"If I cannot be exculpated, oh! my be-
"loved, from the criminal desire, to break
"in upon your engagements, by the ex-
"treme anxiety of mind under which I
"write, I know not what excuse to offer.

"Yet you *must* pardon me, Mary! To
"be wretched, as I am wretched, and to
"seek for no alleviation to my misery, is
"impossible.

"The submission with which I received
"your last afflicting letter, and the silence I
"have preserved under it until now, will
"shew you that I will not lightly offend.

"That you should make the trial that
"was required of you by those who call
"themselves your parents, I acknowledge to
"have been proper in you, however grievous
"to me; nor could I, for a moment, doubt
"your finally adhering to that which you
"believed to be just, however I might
"tremble for the bias that the company,
"which you are compelled to keep, might
"give to your principles. I resolved to
"abide this terrific trial. But I was not

" duped by the indulgence that was pro-
" miſed to be the conſequence of it. I had
" no truſt in the people you are with; and
" I knew, that if I were to be poſſeſſed of
" my Mary, I muſt owe this invaluable bleſ-
" ſing to her own integrity and courage
" alone.

" I did not doubt you—yet I trembled.—
" Mary, my dear Mary, if you love ſtill as
" you were wont to do, you will not blame
" emotions you muſt yourſelf have expe-
" rienced.

" I heard, with ſatisfaction, but without
" ſurpriſe, that the preſumptuous addreſſes
" of Mr. Wynne had been repulſed with
" the diſdain that they deſerved. I could
" not fear a competition there. But what
" muſt be my arrogant opinion of myſelf,
" if I were not alarmed when I find the
" little worth I poſſeſs, unadorned as it is
" by perſonal attractions, and unſupported
" by the props of fortune, oppoſed to the
" acknowledged merit of Lord St. Albans,

" ſet

" ſet off by uncommon gracefulneſs of per-
" ſon, and by all the dazzling appendages of
" rank and riches!

" Such is the picture that is drawn of
" him to me.—And alas! my beloved, if
" if he be ſuch as he is repreſented, how can
" I juſtify the ſelfiſhneſs, that ſtill urges me
" to entreat I may not be ſacrificed to his
" ſuperiority?

" Once I flattered myſelf that I might
" have been your defender: But Lord St.
" Albans has written his title to that di-
" ſtinction in characters of blood. Was
" ſuch ferocity acceptable to you? Ah!
" what is it that I would not have done to
" have vindicated innocence like your's, ex-
" cept that which Lord St. Albans did!—
" Yet if ſuch a ſacrifice was grateful to
" you—but no! the thing is impoſſible;—
" you might pardon ſuch a deviation from
" rectitude, but you could not approve it:
" And have you not pardoned it? And
" when I think of all the reaſons you have to
" pardon it, can I condemn you?

" I

"*I* can offer you nothing; *he* offers you "all that is worthy of your acceptance.— "Oh! my *once own* Mary, you know not "what torture wrings my heart at this mo-"ment; you know not the cruel difcord "that reigns there. The ftruggle between "felf and—you——Happy, happy times! "for ever gone, I fear, when thefe two dear "interefts were infeparable.

"I *would* fay, think not of me; regard "only your own happinefs;—continue to "adorn the ftation, to which—alas! for "me!—you were born.—But I *cannot* fay "this.—My heart dies within me at the "thought.—Yet, oh! my beloved, believe "the unadulterated fincerity, with which I "I aver, that I would do more than *die*—I "would refign you, rather than detract one "particle from your felicity. There is a "*poffibility* that would reconcile my gene-"rofity, and my every thing and happinefs "in this world: But it is fo prefumptuous, "fo unreafonable a poffibility!—Can it be "*indeed* poffible? Can it be that I am ftill

"the

" the beloved of my Mary's heart? Still
" preferred, poor, uneducated ruſtic as I am,
" to the rich, the learned, and the polite?

"But alas! *could* this be ſo, ought I to
" wiſh to ſee you in that ſituation of life to
" which ſuch a preference would lead?—
" Would I willingly narrow the ſphere of
" your excellence? Would I confine thoſe
" charms and thoſe talents to a cottage,
" which would dignify a throne? But is not
" this, my deareſt, the language of the world
" and of prejudice, rather than that of the
" heart and of reaſon? What alone are the
" true purſuits of life? The exerciſe of vir-
" tue, and the permanency of happineſs.—
" Are there more virtues to be practiſed on
" a throne, than in a cottage? Is happineſs
" more ſtable under gilded cielings, than
" under roofs of thatch? Are not our virtue
" and happineſs in proportion to our uſe-
" fulneſs? Do my partialities and my wiſhes
" deceive me, when I aſſert that more gene-
" ral benefit is derived from thoſe in the
" lower and middle ſtations of life, than
" from

" from those in the higher? The great, like " beacons set on a hill, may warn from dan- " gers, or point to safety. Those who la- " bour with the mind or the body, like the " obscure rivulet, silently holds on their way, " unnoticed and unthought of, until their " course is marked by the fertilization that " attends it.

" What then, oh! my best beloved, are " they but words without meaning, when I " talk of *narrowing* the sphere of your ex- " cellence, of *confining* your charms and your " talents to a cottage? No where can they " be more extensively useful, for no where " can they be wanted so much. The be- " nefit they would there confer would be " almost the work of creation. Have we " not heard our kind Mr. Ellis say, that he " was able to do more good in one year at " Llamamon than in all the years that he " spent in the great world? No, if you " *should* still dignify me, by your preferring " love, I should not have to reproach my- " self, than while I was greatly happy in the

fruits

"fruits of it, I had rendered you leſs *bene-*
"*ficial* to their fellow mortals than the God
"of us all had deſigned you to be. But
"who ſhall inſure me, that I ſhall not
"render you leſs *happy?*

"Ah! my deareſt creature, believe me
"that I would not purchaſe years of felicity
"by one day's miſery to you. I can——I
"*think*——I can renounce you; but where
"am I to find the courage that is to ſupport
"me under the conviction, that it is thro'
"my agency you are leſs happy than you
"would have been, had you never known
"me?

"Spare me this evil, and I will learn to
"bear any other you may impoſe.

"If, then, your new way of life has ſuch
"charms for you, as it would be painful to
"you to forego; if this Lord St. Al-
"bans——Oh! Heaven ſhield you from
"a pain ſimilar to that which ſuch a ſuppo-
"ſition can inflict! If this Lord St. Al-
"bans, with all his chaſtity, and all his
"merit, has thrown the once loved qualities

"of your William into the ſhade—purſue "your recent taſte, and gratify at once your "parents, your lover, and yourſelf.—But "then be ſincere, and tell me you are "changed. Let me learn my fate from "yourſelf; and oh! delay not the blow.— "No longer can I bear the ſtate of tortur-"ing ſuſpenſe, in which I have exiſted for "ſome weeks paſt. *From* you I have heard "nothing; and all I have heard *of* you has "been wretchedneſs.

"You may ſay I ought to wait the time "appointed for your deciſion; but that is "impoſſible.

"I am aſſured that preparations are mak-"ing for your marriage with Lord St. Al-"bans;—that you are to be his—when? "alas! even now you may be his.—And it "is an unpardonable temerity in me to en-"treat, if I muſt be undone, that you will "yourſelf ſign the mandate of my ruin?

"I plead no rights; I urge no engage-"ment.—My rights were in your heart;—"your engagements were in your affections.

"If

"If I have loſt the one—if you have "changed the other, I have no rights that I "would urge, you have no engagements "that I wiſh you to keep. Be ſpeedy, and "let me know the worſt. I cannot live "another month in the ſtate I am now in.

"Perhaps you will aſk after your friends. "You may inquire concerning your once "loved Llamamon. But what can I tell "you that will give you pleaſure? Our "dear mother droops, and wiſhes not for "the continuance of a life which is robbed "of its beſt joys. Our kind Mr. Ellis has "been, for many weeks, confined to his bed. "Your abſence has ſpread deſolation thro' "the walks of Llamamon. I have never "ſtirred from the vicarage ſince I returned "into Merionethſhire. Mr. Ellis wiſhes "me to cloſe his eyes; nor will it be long "before he is gratified. How will theſe de- "tails afflict you! For even ſhould you be "changed towards me, you will be the "ſame towards our dear mother, and our "kind Mr. Ellis. They daily pray to God

"to ſhower upon you the choiceſt bleſſings.
"Oh! may their prayers be heard! and
"the good they wiſh you be doubled, if it
"be poſſible, a thouſand and a thouſand
"fold!

"My beſt beloved, and *ever* to be beſt
"beloved—farewell.

"I ought to entreat your pardon for the
"inconveniencies and the inconſiſtencies of
"this meaſureleſs epiſtle, but I regard them
"not myſelf; and with you they may ſerve,
"(as I am to be the happieſt or moſt miſer-
"able of men) either as a motive for pity,
"or as an apology for rigour."

CHAP.

CHAP. IX.

LONG as this letter was, Mary made it ſtill longer by the torrents of tears, and the many lamentations that ſo mournful a picture of the ſtate of thoſe ſhe ſo dearly loved, drew from her. In her pity for what her dear William ſuffered, ſhe forgot, for a time, her power of alleviating his wretchedneſs; and the image of his deſpair, of her dear mother's grief, and the dying moments of Mr. Ellis, wholly poſſeſſed her mind.

But this forgetfulness of reason continued not long.—She roused herself, and resolved to exert her own courage, that she might inspire it to those who seemed to rely upon her alone for consolation and support.

The hours of each day were, with her, too strictly called to account, to allow her any time unobserved, but that which she stole from sleep. How tediously then crept the moments until the usually late, or rather early hour, of Lady Caroline's domestic economy came, which consigned herself, and all her household, to rest.

Mary retired to bed, and dismised her attendant; but she was no sooner withdrawn, than she again rose, eager to speak comfort to William, and to exculpate herself. Thus she wrote:

"Who told you that preparations were "making for my marriage with Lord St. "Albans? Who told you that I might be "already his? Was it the same person who

"gave

" gave you ſo flattering a picture of his " charms and his virtues? Equally authen- " tic was each intelligence.

" My dear friend, ſhall I reproach you " for giving credit to reports ſo injurious to " me, or ſhall I conſole you under the " miſery theſe reports have inflicted upon " you? I ought, perhaps, to reproach you; " and I can think of nothing but how to " conſole you.

" No, my dear William, I am not chang- " ed; my taſte, my affections, my princi- " ples, are the very ſame I imbibed with the " air I breathed at dear Llamamon. But I " claim no merit from this. Not to prefer " what I once poſſeſſed, to that which I am " now compelled to endure, would ſpeak " me as void of reaſon as of virtue.

" My good friend, you know not the life, " the manners, the perſons whom you be- " lieve to be ſo alluring. Nor am I miſtreſs " of a pencil that can paint them in their " true colours.

"This Lord St. Albans! your hero, or "the hero of your unknown informers, so "formidably arrayed in the divine panoply "of virtues and graces.—What is he? A "person of no energy; yet capable of acts "of the most daring folly. Selfish, licen- "tious, unprincipled—a murderer! yes, a "murderer in *design*, if not in *fact*; and yet "you have suffered yourself to believe he "might be united to me! Oh! William! "William! when I am happy enough to "allow me to think of revenge, how shall "you suffer for this."

"I know not whether he possesses the un- "common gracefulness of person, which you "impute to him; for I have looked at him "so little, that his features are scarcely "known to me.—But this I know, that in "my eyes he has not a single charm. I see "him only as opposed to you.—Shrink not "from the comparison—you have no need. "In the one, I see all that is manly, gene- "rous, humane, and virtuous. In the other,

"nothing

"nothing but what is frivolous, selfish, un-
"feeling, and unjust. The one is ready to
"sacrifice rights the most unquestionable, a
"happiness the most dear to him, prospects
"the most seductive, to the imagined pos-
"sibility that such a sacrifice may contribute
"to the happiness of her he loves.

"The other, in defiance of all rights,
"grasps at the possession of a woman, who
"declares the most decided preference to
"another, seeks self-gratification in the
"misery of her who is to bestow it, and for
"a momentary indulgence to himself, would
"mark every coming hour of her life with
"wretchedness and despair.

"Think you, my dear friend, I do not
"love *myself* too well, not to continue to
"love *you*?

"You will ask whence then comes praise
"to such a character as I have described.

"What says the proverb? In the coun-
"try of the blind, the one eyed is a King.
"But if Lord St. Albans is less imperfect
"than his companions, is that a reason why

" I ſhould prefer him to thoſe who have no
" blemiſh? Shall I, who have breathed the
" pure air of virtue and Llamanon, deſire
" to reſpire the thick and adulterated at-
" moſphere that now ſurrounds me? Ah!
" no! did my power ſecond my will, far,
" far would I fly from *your* man of excellence,
" and London for ever.

" Be aſſured, my dear William, it is not
" my heart alone that makes this preference;
" it is my reaſon, and my principles.

" Thoſe manners, of which we have heard
" ſo much, and which we have imagined ſo
" refined, ſo ſoft, ſo delicate, would put
" ruſtics to the bluſh, and cover our milk-
" maids with confuſion. I cannot delineate
" them to you. The leaſt reproach to the
" life thoſe lead, with whom I now aſſociate,
" is, that it is one continued idleneſs; and
" deviation into action leads to vice. How
" unintelligible here would be your defini-
" tion of the true purpoſes of life—uſeful-
" neſs! It is for mechanics, William. A
" man of faſhion, a woman of the ton, would
" bluſh

" blush to be called useful.—And even happiness, the permanent and the true, is as little their care as usefulness. What they seek are the evanescent joys of momentary gratification.—" Let the morrow take care for the things of itself," say they.—But do you suppose *me* so short-sighted for the future, and so prodigal of the present?

" Real permanent happiness, founded on the basis of active virtue, is the object of my wishes, and of my pursuit. Whether it is to be mine in this life, or in the next, belongs not to me to decide; but as the reward is sure, if I keep on my right way, so will I not turn aside for any of those glittering baits which so perpetually cross my path, and which you think endanger my stumbling.

" Soon, indeed, did the veil of indulgence, with which Sir James and Lady Caroline had sought to involve their real designs, drop from before my eyes.

" I found I had been duped; but I found not, therefore, any reason for an undue

" precipitancy on my part. Never, except " driven to an extremity I cannot fear, will " I diſgrace the legitimate, the honourable " love I bear you, by becoming a runaway, " and an offender againſt the laws of my " country. You know my reſolution on " this head—it is irrevocable. Where, " then, can I ſo much *wiſh* to paſs the inter- " vening time, between the preſent and " that in which I mean to act for myſelf, as " in the houſe of my parents? It is poſſible " I might paſs it elſewhere with ſomewhat " more pleaſure in the preſent, but certainly " no where with ſo much reputation for the " future. Suffer not, however, your former " doubts to recur. Think not that I ſhall, " as you once expreſſed it, become accuſ- " tomed to trappings, until I cannot go " ſafely without them. Do not ſuppoſe " that lords and ladies will have charms for " me. Could you know them, you would " not affront me by ſo injurious a ſuſpicion.

" The delights of my childhood ſhall never " fade from my remembrance. " Eaſe,

" elegance,

" elegance, and luxury, will, I hope, always
" be exchanged by me, not only with pa-
" tience, but ſatisfaction, for " labour, ruſti-
" city, and a bare competence," while eaſe
" is idleneſs, elegance faſtidiouſneſs, and
" luxury voluptuouſneſs. The life I now
" lead will confirm my predilection for that
" to which I look forward, and having
" known all it can beſtow, I ſhall be ſecure
" from thoſe longings after an imaginary
" good, which ſo often deſpoil real happineſs
" of its power to bleſs. Thus will the pre-
" ſent not be wholly profitleſs to the future.
" Depend upon that future, my dear friend.
" It offers us all that is neceſſary to happi-
" neſs and virtue. Nor do I ſhrink from
" the interval. I ſhall be threatened ;—I
" ſhall be tormented ; but I cannot be
" compelled ; and when I am found to be
" incorrigibly unworthy of my boaſted *birth*,
" perhaps I ſhall be abandoned to my fate,
" and left at liberty to ſeek the aſylum
" which I know love and induſtry will offer
" me.

“ Oh! William, if you knew how my
“ mind exults at the thoughts of quitting,
“ for ever, theſe regions of inſolence, idleneſs,
“ and vice, you would huſh all the doubts
“ and diſquietudes of your heart to reſt,
“ and wonder how you could diſtruſt the
“ integrity of mine. Be eaſy, then, my
“ friend, or at leaſt ſuffer no anxieties to
“ find admiſſion into your boſom, but thoſe
“ which are inſeparable from abſence.

“ But alas! my friend, although I can
“ ſpeak comfort to you, I cannot give health
“ to my dear Mr. Ellis; I cannot give hap-
“ pineſs to my beloved mother. What a
“ picture have you drawn of the once health-
“ ful and gay ſcenes of dear Llamamon! Oh!
“ could I fly to that cheriſhed ſpot, and
“ bring healing and gaiety under my wings!

“ Shall I come? Thoſe who were once
“ more than my parents, languiſh for my
“ preſence: Ought I not to quit thoſe,
“ who, although really ſo, ſeem to ſicken at
“ the ſight of me? Let our dear Mr. Ellis
“ decide

" decide for us. If he says come, I fly to " you.

" My dear mother, let me say a word to " you.—Why are you thus cast down?— " Let me exhort you to courage; let me " instruct you in it.—There's presumption; " but you do not know how well I have " begun to think of myself since I have kept " *good* company.—We shall meet again— " doubt it not;—we shall meet again, and " be happy.

" You shall see me resume, under your " eye, those offices in which you first in- " structed me; you shall see me exchange " my gaudy robes for my brown russet;— " you shall hear me carol over my labours, " and you shall forget that I was ever sepa- " rated from you. Ah! what a world is " this, that you once knew, and which I " wish I had never known! Sometimes I " cannot believe what I hear and see. I " blush every minute, and I shrink from " the conversation of the *best* company. I " find, with astonishment, that education,

" rank,

" rank, and fortune, do not ſecure from " ignorance, meanneſs, and want. How " can theſe things be? Cannot you and Mr. " Ellis explain them to William? Will he " not otherways be unable to comprehend " what I have told him, and may perhaps " find incredible the averſion I expreſs for " ſuch ſociety.

" Above all, my dear mother, comfort " yourſelf; watch over our dear Mr. Ellis; " reſtore him to health: Exhort William to " exertion, and all will be well.

" Will not my dear father, who always " taught me " to be hopeful," aſſiſt you in " the taſk? Let William find this farm and " his two cows; do you prepare me a clean " cottage and a little garden, and I fly to " you, to learn prudence by your precepts, " and induſtry by your example.

" This letter is as long as a ſermon, and " as grave. William's letter has made me " *ſo* ſorry! and then I am obliged to think " ſo much—to reaſon—to ſettle the right " and the wrong—to preſerve my heart ſo

" firm,

"firm, and my manners ſo yielding;—to "reſiſt to the death in one point—to con-"form in all others.—Ah! it is too much "for my little reaſon, and my light heart. "Such habits of gravity and wiſdom come "upon me, that I look every morning for "grey hairs. My treſſes, however, ſo far "continue to flow in auburn ringlets; and "e'er they take a ſilver hue, I truſt I ſhall "reſign my wiſdom into your hands, as a "ſtore from whence to draw upon emergent "occaſions, as in time paſt—and my gravity "to—whoever will accept of it.

"My dear mother, my father, my kind "Mr. Ellis, my good, and dear friend Wil-"liam, farewell! and comfort or encourage "one another.

"You ſhall hear from me, if any change "happens; but write as ſeldom as poſſible, "leſt frequent letters ſhould lead to detec-"tion, and put an end to our intercourſe."

Mary conjectured, that ſhe owed the receipt of William's letter to the intervention of the houſe maid, and ſhe concluded that ſhe ſhould find her ready to take charge of hers. Accordingly, when next ſhe ſaw her, ſhe delivered her the letter ſhe had written, ſaying, as ſhe looked earneſtly at her, " You will take care that this letter is put ſafely into the poſt."

The girl bluſhed; but replied, " You may depend upon me, Madam;" and Mary had no longer any doubt of the friendlineſs of her intentions.

CHAP.

CHAP. X.

SPEEDY as Mary had been, in adminiſtering conſolation to William, the days that paſſed between the hour in which he had written, to that wherein he received her anſwer, had appeared of an immeaſurable length. His viſits to the poſt-office had been daily, even when he knew it was impoſſible he ſhould find what he ſought.—But when the impatiently expected letter was put into his hands, he was ſeized with an univerſal trembling, and was obliged to ſit

ſit down upon the ground, before he could gain ſteadineſs of hand ſufficient to open it.

No ſooner had his eye haſtily caught the ſenſe of the firſt lines, than he ſtarted up, and ran like lightning towards Llamamon. Breathleſs, he ruſhed into Mr. Ellis's room, and exclaiming, "She is true—ſhe is mine!" ſunk motionleſs on a chair.

The feeble old man felt a thrill of joy ſhoot to his heart, that for a moment ſeemed to reſtore him to his full vigour.

"Did I not tell you ſo?" cried he.—"Mary is Heaven's choiceſt work."

William, now recollecting, began to reproach himſelf for the imprudence he had been guilty of; but Mr. Ellis, his eyes ſparkling with delight, told him, the ſight of his joy was his beſt cordial, and he bade him place himſelf by him, and read the letter aloud.

William endeavoured to obey him; but the violence of his emotions made this impoſſible; and before the lecture was half over, Eleanor entered the room. Her preſence increaſed the general happineſs; and could Mary have witneſſed the power ſhe maintained over the three people, whom ſhe beſt loved in the world, ſhe would have thought herſelf the happieſt creature in it.

When William read her offer to come directly to Mr. Ellis, " Do pray, dear Sir," ſaid he, " give your ſanction to this bleſſed propoſal. Why ſhould our dear Mary continue in the haunts of wickedneſs, with thoſe who ſo little know her value ?"

" Ah! William," replied Mr. Ellis, " have you ſo little profited by the juſtneſs of thought ſo viſible in all that Mary writes? Shall my ſelfiſhneſs, or your's, counteract the good ſenſe and propriety which dictate the determinations of this excellent creature? She ſees truly the place where ſhe ought to be,

be, and it is our duty to encourage her to perſiſt in her reſolution to abide there."

The addreſs to Eleanor melted her into tears, but it gave none of the courage that it was meant to inſpire.

"Oh! my beloved, my excellent child!" cried ſhe; "but alas! I ſhall never, never ſee her more!"

"Forbear, Eleanor," ſaid Mr. Ellis; "it is indeed very probable that *I* ſhall never ſee her again; yet I will not reject the hope ſhe is ſo ſolicitous to give; and *you* have no reaſon, with reſpect to yourſelf, to ſuppoſe it will be in vain."

"Three years, Sir!" returned Eleanor; "three years! Think of that.—How is it poſſible I ſhould ever ſee her again?"

"Be aſſured," ſaid Mr. Ellis, "that her fate will come to an iſſue much before the end of three years. The violences of thoſe unworthy parents will drive her upon

meaſures

meaſures that ſhe diſapproves, but which ſhe is not, it ſeems, wholly unprepared for."

"God grant it!" ſaid William, fervently.

"William?" ſaid Mr. Ellis, with a half ſmile.

"Ah! Sir, if I am wrong," cried William, "forgive me; but how could I be ſorry for any conduct that ſhortened the period of my beloved Mary's trials, and opened her an allowed ſhelter in theſe arms!"

"We muſt endeavour to make that ſhelter as eligible as poſſible," ſaid Mr. Ellis.—"Hitherto, my dear William, I have kept you idle, from a weak indulgence to the only ſelfiſh wiſh I entertain on this ſide the grave. But I am convinced that I ſhall not long remain an obſtacle to your praiſe-worthy exertions: Nor will the time you have paſſed by my bed-ſide be wholly loſt; but of that no more. I am worth ſix hundred pounds; I have not a relation in the world who has a claim upon it; it ſhall be your's. With it you will be able to ſtock a farm, and immediately to begin the world for yourſelf.

This will be an aſylum worthy of Mary, and to her taſte. A few months will put you in poſſeſſion of this ſum; ſo look around you, and fix upon a ſituation that will be agreeable to yourſelf, and to her."

William was ſtruck dumb with this proof of the parental love and conſideration of his more than parent. He graſped his hands. He preſſed them to his lips, but he could not ſpeak.—At length—long, very long before——a paſſion of tears broke in upon his ſpeech.

"The period," ſaid Mr. Ellis, "will be when it pleaſes God; and come when it will, let it be your conſolation, my dear child, that it comes not before it is earneſtly wiſhed for by me. Could I have ſeen you united with Mary, and happily ſettled, I ſhould have ſeen all in this world that I deſired;—but I am more than indemnified for any coming ſhort in my own wiſhes, by ſeeing the propriety and rectitude that rules the mind, and

and resolutions of my darling. Write to her, William; tell her how sensible I am of her ardent love for me, but enjoin her to continue where she is. If I can force my trembling hand to obey the dictates of my heart, I will subjoin my blessing. Tell her of your prospects; such expectations will cheer her, and a certainty, that, come when she will, she will not be a burthen to you; will remove the only painful consideration, that, when she thinks of her union with you, presses, perhaps, upon her heart."

"And William," said Eleanor, "let your farm be near Llamamon."

William could scarcely speak; he could not think, and was at length obliged to withdraw, that he might recollect and compose himself.

When a little recovered from the effect of his grateful and joyous emotions, he returned to Mr. Ellis's chamber, and there poured

forth the varied emotions of his heart, earneſtly praying, that long might it be before he reaped any benefit from the generous intentions of his kind benefactor.

Mr. Ellis, exhauſted by all that had paſſed, at length deſired to be left alone, and William withdrawing, retired to write to Mary. Thus he wrote:

" I am now, my beloved, almoſt as in-
" capable of thinking juſtly from the effects
" of joy, as I was when I laſt wrote, from
" thoſe of grief.

" What language affords words that can
" expreſs the tranſports with which your
" dear and invaluable letter has filled my
" heart? The feelings of the heart, when
" they are exquiſite and extatic, as thoſe I
" now experience, are indeed inexplicable
" by words, but they will not be the leſs un-
" derſtood by you. It is to your tenderneſs,
" to your generoſity and truth, that I ap-
" peal, for a knowledge of thoſe emotions
" which

"which love and gratitude have raiſed in "my mind.

"Were not doubt inſeparable from un-"bleſſed affection, I could not forgive my-"ſelf for the apprehenſions and miſgivings "that ſo cruelly tortured me a little while "ago. Your conſtancy, your love, your "preference of the ſimple and virtuous life "of uſeful induſtry, to the ornamented vice "of profitleſs idleneſs, appears ſo juſt, ſo "right, ſo conſonant to all I ever knew of "my Mary, that nothing ſeems more cul-"pable in my eyes, than the fears I once ſuf-"fered to find admittance into my mind.— "Could it be, that I had loſt her image "from my remembrance, and ſubſtituted "in her place ſomething the very reverſe of "what ſhe was? You will make me no re-"proaches; but I can never ceaſe to re-"proach myſelf. Be aſſured, however, that "my doubts ſhall never recur: They could "be founded only on the falſe ideas I had "entertained of the manners and principles "of thoſe, who, poſſeſſing every means of

" thinking juſtly, and acting rightly, I had
" conceived muſt ſo think, and ſo act.—
" You have undeceived me; you have re-
" conciled my love for myſelf, with my love
" for you.

" Yes, my beloved; poor ruſtic as I am,
" it is not vanity convinces me that there is
" more happineſs to my Mary in an union
" with her William, than in any ſhe could
" form with thoſe who are regarded as ſo
" much his ſuperiors. It is not vanity, I
" ſay, that produces this conviction; for it
" is grounded not on my virtues, but on
" your's.

" Yet, my beloved creature, even to
" minds moderate and ſimple as your own,
" unremitted labour, and ſcanty ſubſiſtence,
" are misfortunes;—and to misfortune I
" could never have invited you. But my
" ſwelling heart is ſcarcely retained within
" my boſom, when I tell you that ſuch will
" not be your deſtiny as the wife of your
" William.

" Our

"Our good, our kind and beneficent, our "more than parental Mr. Ellis, ſhelters us "from ſuch a fate. He has adopted us "for his children; he will enable us to "make our labour productive; he will put "the means of attaining eaſe and affluence "into our hands.

"It is not a cottage I ſhall prepare for "you; it is a warm and ſubſtantial farm-"houſe, ſtored within with all that can con-"tribute to comfort; ſtocked without with "all that can contribute to profit; and it "is Mr. Ellis who will furniſh me with the "means of doing this. But alas! my "deareſt, it is by misfortune that we are to "arrive at happineſs! This dear friend will "rather *bequeath* than *beſtow* theſe means. "already I hear you join with me in ex-"claiming, long, very long may it be before "we poſſeſs them! The wiſh is ardent, but "vain. The *mortal* exiſtence of this inva-"luable man can be prolonged but for a "ſhort ti ne; far, far ſhort, I fear, of that "in which you have promiſed to be mine.

 "Already

" Already he longs after his well secured pa-
" radise, and he bids us make this our con-
" solation. Thus it is that he orders me to
" write to you; that you may be " cheered
" with the prospect before you; and lose all
" fear that you shall be a burthen to me;"
" a burthen, Mary! Oh! would to Heaven
" he would have sanctioned your pious de-
" sire of administering to the wants of his
" last moments! but he forbids you to
" think of it; he commands you to con-
" tinue where you are, and to justify, by the
" propriety of your present conduct, that
" you meditate in future. You have re-
" ferred yourself to his judgment, and I wish
" you not to dispute it; yet I see not what
" advantage can accrue from your longer
" continuance where you are.

" Our dear mother is overwhelmed with
" the emotions your letter has excited; and
" hope in her heart has been too long dead,
" quickly to revive; but your fostering care
" and kindness may yet restore it to her.

" Continue,

"Continue, my dearest, to write to me; "and remember, although I will doubt no "more, I can only know happiness from my "communication with you.

Written by Mr. ELLIS.

"Go on, my blessed child, in the path of "reason, virtue, and simplicity; peace of "mind in the progress, and Heaven in re- "version, are the sure rewards. My last "breath shall bless you.

"FAREWELL!"

CHAP. XI.

THE ſecure and certain intercourſe that was now eſtabliſhed between William and Mary, communicated ſo much peace to her mind, as to enable her to ſupport, with patience and cheerfulneſs, the daily increaſing tyranny and oppreſſion of Sir James and Lady Caroline.

No diſguiſe was now attempted. She was told, in the moſt explicit terms, that ſhe muſt prepare to become the wife of Lord St. Albans, and to this denunciation there ſeemed

to

to be no alternative; it was abſolute, and ſhe could not but obſerve, that both Sir James and Lady Caroline appeared certain of carrying their point.

Lord St. Albans ſcarcely ever quitted her; and while he wearied her with continual profeſſions of the moſt ardent love, and promiſes of the greateſt future indulgence, he plainly ſhewed that he could love no one but himſelf, and that he was the abettor of all her preſent ſufferings.

Lady Caroline now truſted her hardly a moment from her ſight. Madame de Merville was eſtabliſhed in her room, which ſhe quitted not, when Mary was there, night nor day. It was rarely that ſhe was now permitted to viſit at Mrs. Elliot's; and all intercourſe, beyond the coldeſt civility, was forbidden between her and Anna.

In theſe circumſtances, ſhe would have found it extremely difficult to have received

William's letters, had it not been for the address of the friendly house-maid, who, without coming to any explanation, or appearing to take any part but that of a respectful domestic, never failed to find an opportunity, unobserved, of conveying them to her hands. The difficulty of writing to him was still greater. But as love is even more wakeful than suspicion, Mary found hours in every night in which she could employ herself unnoticed by her drowsy spy. She repeated her injunctions, however, to William, to write seldom; and she contented herself with only giving him, from time to time, short details of her own situation.

It was now the middle of June, and Mary learnt, that the family was to remove into the country in a few days. She heard this with pleasure, for she conceived it impossible that she should not enjoy more liberty, and lead a life more to her taste, in a large house, in the quiet and the pure air of the country, than

than in the narrower limits of a town reſidence, and the ſmoke and noiſe of London. The ſeaſon of the year had rendered the reſtraint, to which ſhe was ſubjected, almoſt inſupportably irkſome. She panted after the ſight of green fields and woods, and, in the exultation of her heart, ſhe wrote thus to William:

"No more crowded rooms, no more ſuf-
"focating effluvia of miſnamed eſſences;—
"no more immeaſurable dinners, where
"gluttony and idleneſs ſtrive for maſtery.—
"I am going to reſpire the free air of the
"country; I am going to breathe its ſweets,
"and enjoy its liberty; yet ſhall I carry
"thoſe with me who will contaminate all its
"delights. I am not, however, unthank-
"ful to exchange the *intolerable* for the *to-*
"*lerable*, and forgetting, as much as I can,
"the preſent, think only of the future;—of
"that future, where nature and virtue will
"enjoy their full rights. Oh! how I long
"to exchange, and *for ever*, the reſplendent

 drawing-

" drawing-room, for the neatly ſwept par-
" lour—the long ſucceſſion of pernicious
" cookery, for the ſingle diſh of wholeſome
" viands; idleneſs for induſtry, and, above
" every thing, the ſociety of all that diſ-
" graces human nature, for all that adorns
" it. Theſe people are like the peace of
" God;—they paſs all underſtanding—at
" leaſt my underſtanding: Their pleaſures,
" their chagrins, their purſuits, are all alike
" incomprehenſible to me. William, my
" dear William, the time will come when I
" ſhall bid adieu to this farrago of vice and
" nonſenſe. Heaven preſerve our dear Mr.
" Ellis to witneſs and bleſs theſe moments!
" My heart has ſcarcely lain ſtill an inſtant
" ſince you told me he was better; who
" knows what your unwearied care may do
" for him? And ſhould thoſe with whom I
" am proceed to extremities, who knows
" but that I may add my cares to your's?—
" Our faithful friend goes with us; and I
" ſhall ſtill receive, through her means, any

" intelligence

"intelligence you direct to Rookby Park, "near Dunſtable."

Mary beheld, with inexpreſſible delight, the hour arrive that was to bear her from London; ſhe ſprung into the coach, and as ſhe took what ſhe hoped might be the laſt view of the ſmoke darkened buildings around her, her pleaſure was ſo great, that ſhe almoſt forgot that Lord St. Albans was ſeated by her ſide.

"My dear creature," cried he, looking earneſtly at her, "I have not ſeen that lovely countenance ſo enlightened of ages.—Can I be happy enough to contribute to the pleaſure that beams there?"

"You my lord? Ah! when do you ever contribute to my pleaſure?

"It is not for want of the moſt ardent deſire to do ſo," returned he.—"But if *I* am

not

not the caufe, pray indulge me with telling me what is."

"I fear it will be incomprehenfible to you," faid Mary.—"Your Lordfhip feels no joy in quitting fmoke, noife, and diffipation, for pure air, quiet, and leifure."

"How much are you miftaken," faid Lord St. Albans.—With you I care not if I were to turn Anchoret."

"Idlenefs, in one fhape or other," returned Mary, fcornfully, "I know is your Lordfhip's tafte. But for my own part, I would have not a moment of the day unmarked with ufefulnefs, and I hope that in Hertfordfhire I fhall be allowed to refume fome of thofe employments, that the more important bufinefs of injuring my health, and throwing away my time, have, for many weeks, fufpended."

"Oh!" cried Lady Caroline, with malice in her tone, "don't be afraid; we will find you bufinefs enough in the country."

"But not in Hertfordfhire," cried Sir James, laughing.—"It is really fo eafy to

dupe

dupe you, my wiſe little daughter, that there is no pleaſure in it. To tell you the truth, then, we ſuſpect, that in ſpite of our precautions, you have found means to communicate with that clown of your's; but the channel, whatever it was, through which you conveyed your intelligence, will now be ſhut up. He will ſeek you in vain in Hertfordſhire, while we have you cloſely immured in Cumberland."

Mary coloured with vexation.

"Is this, my Lord," ſaid ſhe, turning to Lord St. Albans, "one of the ways by which you mean to contribute to my pleaſure?"

"My dear creature," returned he, "this meaſure will contribute to more than your pleaſure; it will redound to your laſting advantage; it will be your preſervation."

Mary gave him a look of contempt, and was ſilent, revolving, in her mind, the conſequences of the deceit that had been practiſed.

She knew, that while the faithful houfe-maid continued near her, fhe had it ftill in her power to maintain her intercourfe with William, but fhe could not help entertaining fome fufpicion that her agent might be difcovered by means of the letter, that fhe had no doubt would be directed to her in Hertfordfhire. What alfo increafed her fears, was the impoffibility of her apprifing William of the danger before her arrival at her journey's end; for until fhe fhould rejoin her emiffary, fhe had no means of writing to him.

The difturbance of her mind, while thefe thoughts paffed through it, was fo ftrongly imprinted on her countenance, that, to the fcrutinizing eye of Sir James, there was no farther evidence neceffary to convince him, even to demonftration, of the private correfpondence which had been hitherto carried on; and hence he refolved to double his diligence, to difcover by what means it had been maintained.

Mary's

Mary's patience was now put to a ſevere trial. The party, as if to torment her, loitered on the road ; and while ſhe found it impoſſible to diſengage herſelf from the obſervation of one or other of them, the journey was prolonged to the evening of the fifth day.

CHAP. XII.

AT length they arrived at the family mansion of the Seabrights ;—a large and venerable pile, long neglected by its owners, and now fallen into decay.

A few rooms had been repaired, and set somewhat in order for the present occasion, but nothing had been done beyond what was absolutely necessary, and an air of universal desolation prevailed.

The

The party arrived late in the evening, and after having paſſed through a large and gloomy hall, lighted only by narrow windows, placed many yards above the ground, they found themſelves in a ſpacious ſaloon, decorated with oak wainſcots, and furniſhed with high backed chairs and maſſive tables. The windows, in ſize and ſituation, reſembled thoſe of the hall, and at the late hour, in which they emitted the little light they could afford, rather increaſed the general gloom than diſpelled it.

Lady Caroline exclaimed—"Good Heavens! Sir James, did you not tell me this place was not quite a dungeon?"

"It is many years ſince I was here," returned Sir James, careleſsly; "I ſcarcely remember what it was; but I dare ſay it will anſwer our purpoſes very well, and we can procure a few carpets from the neighbouring town for the little time we ſhall ſtay here."

"I cannot ſtay another moment in this room," ſaid Lady Caroline; "it gives me the vapours; the ſound of my feet frightens me.—Where does this door lead to? Pray call for candles; and do order a fire; it is as damp as a priſon."

"A priſon!" repeated Mary to herſelf, and her heart died within her.

"Come, come hither," cried Lady Caroline, from another room, and in a ſprightlier tone.—"This is ſomething more tolerable; and with ſofas, and moveable tables, it will be poſſible to exiſt here for a few weeks, perhaps."

Sir James and Lord St. Albans followed her; but Mary, ſtruck with Sir James's words, "It will anſwer our purpoſes very well," and overcome with the gloom that ſurrounded her, and the ſenſe how completely ſhe was now ſeparated from all who would reſpect her feelings, or pity her diſtreſs, remained immoveable in the middle of the ſaloon, with her eyes fixed on the ground, and

and meditating upon what poſſible miſchiefs might be deſigned her.

"They hope nothing," ſaid ſhe to herſelf, "from my conſent; and who ſhall protect me from their power? Oh! William, my confidence has undone both you and myſelf!"

Lady Caroline's voice rouſed her from her ſad reverie.

"Where's Mary? Why don't you come into this room, child?"

Mary moved ſlowly towards it, but felt no alleviation from the painfulneſs of her feelings, from the gayer appearance of this other apartment.—It was hung with paper; the windows were lower, and the room itſelf ſmaller.

Lady Caroline was buſy in arranging what furniture was already there, and in reſolving

what

what ſhe ſhould ſend for. A harpſichord, which ſhe had ſent from town, was already placed there, and on this Lord St. Albans was running over a few notes. A large wood fire was juſt ſet blazing; ſeveral candles were lighted, and a general cheerfulneſs ſeemed to prevail with all but Mary.

"Now," cried Lady Caroline, opening another door, "if this ſhould lead into a decent dining-room, this place will not be ſo intolerable. It is rather ſombre, ſaid ſhe, juſt looking in, and ſhrinking back; but not ſo tremendous as the dreadful ſaloon. We will ſup here to night, and to-morrow I ſhall have more courage to explore the dark receſſes of this enchanted caſtle, and to determine what parts of it we may venture to inhabit."

Supper was ſoon brought in, and Lady Caroline, her ſpirits riſing with the thoughts of how wide a field ſhe ſhould have wherein to diſplay her taſte, and love of expence, in her

her new modelling, and furniſhing the old manſion, became very gay. She uttered a thouſand witticiſms, or what ſhe thought witticiſms, on the long cravatted heroes, and high tired dames of paſt times; coquetted with Lord St. Albans; ſcoffed at Mary;—rallied Sir James; and concluded with declaring ſhe thought herſelf very agreeable.

Mary heard, and ſaw nothing of all this. She ſat buried in thought, and unable to determine clearly what it was that ſhe apprehended.

"The country does not ſeem to give you the delight you expected," ſaid Lord St. Albans to her.

"I ſee nothing here," returned Mary, "of the country to which I have been accuſtomed."

"Smokey rafters, with a flitch of bacon hanging from them, is all the idea ſhe has of rural felicity," ſaid Lady Caroline.

Mary made no anſwer; but reſting her head upon her hand, ſuffered the tears to roll unheeded down her cheeks.

"I cannot bear this," ſaid Lord St. Albans.—"My deareſt creature, what is it that diſtreſſes you? What is it that ſo oppreſſes your mind?"

"I know not," ſaid Mary, with a ſob and a broken voice; "but never did I enter a place which filled me with ſo many melancholy and alarming ideas."

The look that was interchanged between Lord St. Albans and Sir James on theſe words created new fears, and haſtily riſing from her ſeat, and throwing herſelf on her knees before Sir James, ſhe cried out, "Oh! tell me—tell me what you mean to do with me? What is the purpoſe for which this terrible manſion will anſwer ſo well?"

Lord St. Albans caught her up.

"Rife, my beloved creature," faid he; "banifh thefe unworthy fears. What can you apprehend with parents who doat on you, and a man who would die to ferve you?"

"Parents who doat on me! a man who would die to ferve me!" repeated Mary, as fhe ftruggled to difengage herfelf from Lord St. Albans.

"Nothing can be more true," faid Sir James; "the proof will be irrefragable.—For your fake, Lady Caroline and myfelf have been carelefs of the pleafures which the prefent feafon offers to the choice of people of fafhion; for your fake we have determined to immure ourfelves in this difmal place; for your fake we have refolved to run all lengths, rather than that you fhould beftow yourfelf unworthily; and Lord St. Albans kindly co-operates in all our plans;—he makes equal facrifices; and be affured you will never go beyond thefe walls, except you pafs them as his wife."

At theſe words a deadly coldneſs ran thro' Mary's veins; an univerſal paleneſs ſpread itſelf over her countenance, and her head dropt lifeleſsly on her boſom.

Lord St. Albans threw water in her face.

"Oh! wound me not," cried he, "with marks of ſo deeply rooted an averſion;—make me not repent of the engagement I have entered into, never to abandon you; make me not doubt of the merit of ſaving you from one ſo unworthy of your charms."

"Cruelly hurt, indeed!" ſaid Lady Caroline, "to be the wife of the moſt accompliſhed nobleman in England.—My lord, you almoſt deſerve the ſcorn you meet with, for the fooliſh pity you ſhew."

Lord St. Albans was, however, really moved by the diſtreſs of Mary; and kneeling at her feet, ſaid all he thought likely to ſoothe and comfort her.

A flood of tears had relieved the oppression of her heart, and restored her power of thought.

"Rise, rise, my lord," said she, repulsing him; "I feel I am in your power. I know I am far from all who would, or could save me; but know, that nothing but the most outrageous force shall ever make me your wife."

"We will not think of force," cried Sir James; "here you will have a fair opportunity of understanding Lord St. Albans' merits unbiassed by any prejudices of your own;—here you will have time to weigh the alternative of being restored to the world the happy wife of one of the most charming men in it, surrounded by every splendor, pleasure, or distinction, that rank and riches can give, or of wasting your youth in this dreary mansion, secluded from every human eye, and all human converse. There will not be occasion for force to determine your choice, such as we wish it to be."

"I proteſt againſt *all* rigorous meaſures," ſaid Lord St. Albans.—"I would owe the bleſſing of this dear hand to the free choice and flattering diſtinction of its beloved owner; and to theſe I ſhall owe it, I doubt not, if your kindneſs for me, Sir James, does not lead you to precipitate matters.—If you will (forgive the ſeeming vanity) if you will allow the good ſenſe, and the good taſte of this dear creature, time to operate in my favour."

"I have already," returned Sir James, "granted more time to the indulgence of her depraved fancy than policy, or even parental affection can juſtify, and your lordſhip ſees the effects.—Have we not all the reaſon in the world to ſuppoſe that this conſcientious fair one, who makes ſuch a route about virtue and principles, has broken her word ſolemnly given to me? that ſhe has found means of holding correſpondence with that worthleſs fellow, to whom her ſcandalous attachment is a diſgrace to her ſex: and that the grief and apprehenſion, which now ſeems

to overwhelm her, proceed wholly from all means of maintaining this ignoble intercourſe being cut off? What farther time would you have me allow to ſuch a rebel?"

"I cannot ſuffer ſuch harſhneſs," replied Lord St. Albans, angrily; "and if you mean to oblige me, Sir James, you muſt treat your lovely daughter with that tenderneſs merit, ſuch as her's, well deſerves.—My beloved creature, cried he, endeavouring to take her hand, be aſſured———"

"Spare your aſſurances, my lord," ſaid Mary, withdrawing it.—"Once I have been duped by blandiſhments—by the pretended kindneſs of a *parent*.—Unwillingly I exchanged confidence for ſuſpicion; but being once conſcious of having been deceived, I can be cheated no more. If you would have me believe the love you profeſs for me, leave me free;—free as God and nature deſigned I ſhould be. The taſte and ſenſe which you now ſo inſiduouſly compliment, may then operate in your favour; but neither

taſte nor ſenſe would juſtify me in preferring my oppreſſor to my defender."

"There, there!" cried Sir James, in a paſſion.—"Do you hear her? An open avowal of the falſehood and deceit ſhe has practiſed."

"Surely," returned Mary, "my words can bear no ſuch meaning. But allow me to ſay, that the contract which I am reproached with as having broken, was mutual. Have the conditions been kept on your part, Sir?"

"You acknowledge, then, they have not been kept on yours?" ſaid Sir James.

"Indeed I do not.—Moſt religiouſly they were kept, until the idea of your part of the engagement was ridiculed; until I was told it was impoſſible, and even wicked to keep it.—I was laughed at for my credulity, and called upon not to make my own choice, but to adopt implicitly and inſtantaneouſly that which was made for me."

"And

"And then you renewed your intercourſe with that clown?" ſaid Sir James.

Mary ſmiled—but it was a ſmile of contempt.

"And then," ſaid ſhe, "I looked upon myſelf at liberty to renew my intercourſe with the man of my choice, and who is worthy of being ſo. Whether I found means ſo to do, belongs to you, Sir, to diſcover, not to me to confeſs."

"Inſolent!" ſaid Lady Caroline.

"I am very unhappy," cried Mary, "that the duties I owe to truth, and to diſcretion, ſhould ſubject me to ſuch a change; and eſpecially from the perſons in the world I am naturally moſt bound to reverence, and whom, in any other circumſtances, I ſhould be moſt happy to obey."

"Oh! Madam," cried ſhe, throwing herſelf ſuddenly on her knees before Lady Caroline, "you are my *mother*; by all the tender affections; by all the ſoft indulgence

attendant on that name, I conjure you to be my *friend!* You know not—you cannot conceive the unbounded influence that engaging character will give you over my mind, nor how much I ſhall conſider myſelf as bound to ſacrifice to its wiſhes."

"You then make no account of the character of a mother?" ſaid Lady Caroline, coldly.

"Alas!" cried Mary, weeping, "if I am to find mother but an empty name, what account *can* I make of it?"

"Well, child, riſe," ſaid Lady Caroline. "You may be aſſured I will prove myſelf your friend, and your beſt friend; but I ſhall not take your opinion as to the mode of my friendſhip: and now pray let us think of going to bed; I abominate theſe ſcenes.— Such romantic flights diſtract me. Nothing can be plainer than the road we all have before us, if we do not confound ourſelves by ſophiſtry and refinement. It is our part to dictate, yours to obey. You will find this,

child, in your bible, and here ought to be an end of the matter."

Lady Caroline then defired Sir James to call for candles, faying, "Let us have abundance of light; I quite tremble with the thoughts of exploring more of this gloomy manfion."

CHAP. XIII.

THE way to the bed-chambers led thro' the melancholy ſaloon, at the farther end of which a door opened into a ſmall hall, from whence went a pair of ſtairs, which led to a long gallery, in which were many different apartments.

The houſe-keeper, who had been ſent down from town, attended to ſhew thoſe which had been reſpectively appointed for each of the party.

The

The one aſſigned to Mary was a ſmall room immediately on the top of the ſtairs; a door opened from it into a large cloſet, which communicated with Lady Caroline's apartment; ſo that, by locking the door which led to the ſtairs, there were no means of entering it, except through Lady Caroline's room.

Madame de Merville had declined to accompany the family into Cumberland, under pretence of bad health; but in fact, as ſhe was really a good-natured woman, from being unwilling to be made the inſtrument of a tyranny which ſhe could not approve. Lady Caroline, concluding that all her trouble with Mary would ſoon be over, by conſigning her to the authority of Lord St. Albans, had thought it unneceſſary to ſupply her place with any one elſe. Mary had, therefore, her room to herſelf; and Lady Caroline was ſatisfied with locking the outer door, and paſſing through the cloſet to her own apartment.—Thus having it always in

her power to break in upon Mary's retirement, and thus making it impoffible, as fhe thought, that fhe fhould elude her vigilance.

Notwithftanding this reftraint, Mary found a very fenfible relief, in being thus left alone. Her room, it is true, was fmall and difmal, with fcarcely any furniture in it, and that of the moft inconvenient kind; but fhe regarded thefe circumftances little;—her mind dwelt wholly upon the change that had taken place in her fituation.

She eafily comprehended, that fhe had been carried to this diftant refidence, not only for the purpofe of breaking off her fuppofed correfpondence with William, but that, by being removed from the obfervation of the whole world, her parents might profecute their defigns without interruption or cenfure. She doubted not but that her marriage with Lord St. Albans was irrevocably refolved upon; and fhe perceived, with dread, that

the compulsion which she had hitherto imagined impossible, might here be practised without difficulty or impediment. As to the alternative of being shut up for life, her good sense regarded it with all the contempt it deserved. She would have been happy to have believed that such an option would be given her, well assured that it could be designed only as a threat, and that it could never seriously be meant to be put in force. But however she might despise such terrors as could only have power over the weak and the ignorant, she was not proof against those which reason too well justified. She fully believed that there was no violence by which it might be possible to compel her to become the wife of Lord St. Albans, that her parents would scruple to use, or he to concur in. She was conscious that her opposition before, or her protest after the ceremony, would avail nothing; and that she might be placed in circumstances wherein she might be even glad to acknowledge herself the wife of Lord St. Albans.

Hitherto there had appeared ſo much ridicule to Mary, in the doctrines ſhe daily heard advanced of thoſe laws of ſociety which were made paramount to the laws of ſimple nature and good faith; and the manners, and turn of thinking in thoſe to whom ſhe was ſubjected, had ſtruck her as being ſo overcharged with abſurdity, that not all her perſecutions, ariſing from them, had been able to rob her of her gaiety. The grief of William, the deſpair of Eleanor, the illneſs of Mr. Ellis, were real evils to her; but the railings of Lady Caroline, the duplicity of Sir James, the aſſiduities of Lord St. Albans, were oftener ſubjects of mirth, than of her ſerious reflection. Having once ſettled her mode of conduct, and appointed, in her own mind, the period of her enfranchiſement, ſhe thought little of her actual ſituation, and that little frequently led to her amuſement. But this lightneſs of heart was grounded upon the perſuaſion that ſhe could always maintain her negative, and that, in no circumſtances whatever, could ſhe be compelled to

violate

violate her faith to William, upon which all her notions of rectitude, or hopes of happineſs were founded.

Affairs now wore a very different aſpect; and as ſhe ruminated upon the dreadful poſſibilities that now occurred to her, the horror with which her mind was filled, ſuſpended, for a time, her powers of reaſoning, and made her inattentive to the means that were yet in her power to avoid ſuch misfortunes.

She caſt her eyes around the room; ſhe tried the lock of the door; almoſt yielding to the impulſe that dictated immediate eſcape; but growing, by degrees, more compoſed, ſhe conſidered that her friend, the houſe-maid, was ſtill near her; that, as ſhe had not been removed, ſhe was probably unſuſpected, and that it would be poſſible, by her means, to appriſe William of her danger, and demand his protection.

But even to this expedient ſhe had many powerful objections. Although Mary had none of the refinement of artificial ſenſibility, ſhe had all the delicacy of genuine virtue.—She ſhrunk from an action that appeared a violation of the diffidence ſo lovely in her ſex; and ſhe had ſtill a ſtronger repugnance to any ſtep that might throw her a burthen either upon William or Mr. Ellis. There was no farm taken, no houſe provided.—Her diſpoſition to induſtry could avail them little. The moſt diſtreſſing poverty, or the moſt painful dependance, muſt be the conſequence of their coming together, in their preſent circumſtances. To return under the roof of Eleanor as her daughter, was impoſſible. Her real parents would from thence reclaim her; and, by having ſought an aſylum which ſhe could not maintain, ſhe would only involve thoſe ſhe loved in her misfortunes, without ſecuring herſelf. As the wife of William, ſhe could alone brave the power of Sir James and Lady Caroline;

but

but to bring difgrace and poverty as her portion, was what appeared to her intolerable.

The night was paffed in a fucceffion of thefe uneafy reflections; nor could fhe come to any refolution: yet her conviction, that if fhe would fecure herfelf from Lord St. Albans, fhe probably had not a moment to lofe, recurred every inftant; and while it made the neceffity of determining more urgent, it almoft deprived her of the power of decifion.

When Lady Caroline came into her room the next morning, fhe remarked upon the palenefs of her countenance, and the heavinefs of her eyes.

"I fee you have flept ill as well as myfelf," faid fhe.—"The gloom of this difmal place gives us all the vapours; but finifh your drefs, and after breakfaft we will take a tour through

through the premiſes, and ſee what is neceſſary to be done to make it tolerable."

When they deſcended the ſtairs together, Lady Caroline obſerved a door on one ſide of the little hall.—She opened it.

"Oh! this goes into the garden," ſaid ſhe.—"Sir James tells me it is walled round, and decorated with long canals, fiſh ponds, and cut yew hedges; and there's a chapel in it. So my little pious daughter you may ſay your prayers within holy walls—a privilege you have ſo long complained of being deprived of. Indeed *I* always go to the church in the *country*, for examples ſake; and when Lord St. Albans' chaplain comes down, which I hope he will, in a few days, all may be done in form and order, and we may have a praying party together."

Mary turned ſick at the words chapel and chaplain; but her emotion was unnoticed by

by Lady Caroline, and they passed together through the saloon to the breakfast-room.

The morning was fine, and the sun illuminated the apartments. All wore a very different aspect from what it had done the night before; and even Lady Caroline declared it was possible to exist. The eating-room was inspected, and found not to be *incorrigible*; and Lady Caroline, having given orders to dispatch some one to the neighbouring town, for workmen and trades-people of different denominations, sat down to repeat over her breakfast those plans of expence and decoration which had made the last night's supper so delicious.

When breakfast was over, to fill up the interval before the arrival of the workmen, she took Mary and Lord St. Albans all over the house, expatiating upon what she *could* do, if she meant the place for a constant residence; but extolling the economy which she meant to practise, in consideration of the

short

ſhort time they were likely to remain there; declaring, if it were Heaven itſelf, ſhe would not continue more than ſix weeks ſo far diſtant from all that was deſirable in life.— And ſhe added, "Indeed I hope leſs than a fortnight will diſmiſs us from this exile, for that I muſt hurry the poor toads out of their lives, or we ſhall be gone before we have any thing ready."

From this inſpection of the houſe, they deſcended into the garden, but Lady Caroline found nothing here to intereſt her; for it being paſt even her power to convert ſtraight walks, formal fiſh ponds, and high hedges, into undulating lawns, flowing ſtreams, and elegant ſhrubberies, in a fortnight's time ſhe gave herſelf no trouble upon the ſubject but contented herſelf with ridiculing the taſte that ſhe had dictated ſo much methodical ſtiffneſs. From this criticiſm, ſhe was ſummoned to attend the trades-people, and ordering Mary to continue in the garden with Lord

Lord St. Albans, ſhe flew eagerly to obey the ſummons.

Mary, exhauſted by the forlornneſs of her own thoughts, and by the torrent of folly and impertinence to which ſhe had been obliged to liſten, no ſooner found herſelf delivered from Lady Caroline, than ſhe threw herſelf upon an old garden ſeat, which was placed within one of the arbours, and burſt into tears.

Lord St. Albans, who was by no means untouched by the extreme and unuſual dejection which ſeemed to have ſeized her, was ſenſibly affected by this mark of her diſtreſs, and throwing himſelf on his knees before her, beſought her to open her mind to him, and rely upon his earneſt deſire to do all in his power to contribute to her happineſs.

"And if I do open my mind to you, and if I do rely upon you," ſaid the weeping Mary, "will you not abuſe my confidence?"

"Never,"

"Never," ſaid Lord St. Albans, "by all that's ſacred."

"Swear not," replied Mary, "if you would have me believe you. But alas!" cried ſhe, recollecting herſelf, "what is the confidence that you require of me? And what can I tell you, that you do not know already? The inclinations of my heart are known; I have never diſavowed them.—You know well what would contribute to my happineſs, yet you continue pretenſions, that, if perſiſted in, muſt conſummate my miſery."

"But why is all this ſo peculiarly grievous to you now?" ſaid Lord St. Albans.—"Hitherto you have rather ſported with my miſery, than ſeemed to apprehend your own, from any pretenſions or claims of mine.—Why do I ſee your removal into the country, the thoughts of which ſeemed to fill you with ſo much delight, now overwhelm you with a ſadneſs I never before witneſſed?"

"You, my Lord," returned Mary, "can beſt anſwer this queſtion.—You know the extent

extent of thoſe ſchemes, the bare ſuſpicion of which ſo ſenſibly alarms me."

"What is it that you ſuſpect?" ſaid Lord St. Albans.

"Every thing that I moſt dreaded," returned Mary, "and every thing that the ſolitude, the diſtance, the gloom of this place ſeemed ſo well fitted to ſecure the perpetration of."

"Thus I puniſh you," ſaid Lord St. Albans, ſuddenly throwing his arms round her, and ſnatching a kiſs, "for making me into a raw head and bloody bones. Is it thus, my deareſt creature, that you dreſs up your marriage with me in the horrors of a ſcarecrow, and yet expect to eſcape without chaſtiſement?"

"My marriage with you, my lord," ſaid ſhe, ſtruggling to diſengage herſelf, "is what will never take place. There can be no marriage where there is no conſent of will; and mine, I am ſure, will always declare againſt you."

"Let

"Let us talk over this matter quietly," ſaid Lord St. Albans.—"My paſſion for you, knows no bounds; you *muſt* be mine; your ſcorn, your diſdain, ſerve but to heighten your charms.—But I ſeek not alone my own gratification: a motive, not leſs powerful, is the ardent deſire I have to reſcue you from a fate unworthy of you, and which, in ſome future hour, you will yourſelf bitterly deplore.—Unwillingly you may become my wife, but grateful will you ſoon be, to find yourſelf ſo.—I will ſpeak plainly to you.

"You are now placed in a ſituation beyond all human help.—Your intercourſe with thoſe who you think your friends cut off.—Your parents reſolved to make you ſuffer the extremity of their diſpleaſure, rather than forego their views. Oppoſition will entail upon you a ſucceſſion of ſeverities that you hardly dream of. Never did I ſee ſo inflexible a temper as Sir James's; never ſo unpitying a heart as Lady Caroline's.—Were I to withdraw my claims, I ſhould not leſſen your ſorrows; for be aſſured, they will

both

both rather ſee you in your grave, than the wife of that peaſant, whom they ſo much abhor. In my arms you can alone find ſhelter from their ſeverity. I do not preſume, at preſent, to ſay I offer you happineſs, but aſſuredly I offer you leſs miſery than your obſtinate rejection of my love will bring upon you; and if the utmoſt tenderneſs, the fondeſt indulgence,—if riches, rank, and liberty, are preferable to unpitying ſeverity, to harſh controul, to powerleſs deſpiſed ſecluſion, I here, on my knees, beſeech you, as you regard your own happineſs, not to reject it."

Mary was ready to ſink, on having ſo lively a picture of all ſhe feared thus preſented to her eyes.

"I have concurred in the plan of removing you to this place," continued Lord St. Albans, "in the hopes of having an opportunity of laying all this before you; and convinced as I am, that your marriage with me

is the only means that can refcue you from fufferings I would rather die than you fhould undergo, it is more for your fake than my own, ardently as I long to call you mine, that I declare nothing fhall turn me afide from my purpofe of making you my wife. My chaplain will be here in a few days;—every thing is prepared; you muft be mine. If not in generofity to me, in pity to yourfelf, be fo without very apparent reluctance, or violent oppofition. I will not afk for your love, until my conduct towards you fhall deferve it, nor expect your gratitude, until you are convinced, by experience, of the obligations that you owe me."

"Never will I give you my love," cried Mary; "never, I fear, will you be entitled to my gratitude! All I dreaded I find is true. But were the evils with which you threaten me ten times greater than they are, or could I give credit to all that you infinuat[illegible] could not fubdue my refolutio[illegible] your's; they could not blind me to [illegible]plicity, the felfifhnefs, the unfeelingnefs of your

your character: they could not make me forget the sincerity, the disinterestedness, and the tenderness of him who will rule every emotion of my heart, while it continues to beat. I am not the fool or the coward that you take me for. I am not to be duped by the pretended generosity of your motives;—by the softness of your manners; by your insinuating words or looks. I am not to be terrified by the evils with which you threaten me. My very fears, indeed, are against you. Where is the misfortune that I would not embrace, rather than become your wife?—My lord, you know me little. I am not the inconsequent, rude, thoughtless girl, that my youth and my gaiety may have led you to believe. In resolving to adhere to my first engagements, it is not that I yield to the impulse of a passion that knows not how to appreciate the me-[illegible]f its object. My choice is rather the [illegible]n, than the offspring of fancy; [illegible]while I know how to distinguish vice from virtue, be assured I shall adhere to William, and reject your lordship."

So ſaying ſhe aroſe; and in ſpite of all the entreaties Lord St. Albans could make uſe of to the contrary, walked haſtily, and in ſilence, to the houſe.

"One word, I entreat you," ſaid Lord St. Albans, as he opened the door of the hall for her to paſs.—"One word;—I entreat you to hear me."

"Not *half* a word," ſaid Mary, haughtily, "will I ever again willingly hear from one who has confeſſed himſelf the abettor of deſigns which are a diſgrace to human nature."

And with theſe words ſhe turned up ſtairs, and went into her own room, leaving Lord St. Albans more than ever enamoured of her beauty, and aſtoniſhed with the dignity of her ſpirit.